



All about African rue

African rue, also called wild rue or rue weed, is a nonnative, highly toxic perennial succulent originally from the deserts of North Africa and parts of southern Asia National Park Service+1. It was first recognized in the U.S. in the 1920s near Deming, New Mexico, when it was introduced intentionally to produce red dye National Park Service+1.

Appearance

Growth form: Bushy, multi-branched perennial with a woody base

Leaves: Bright green, smooth, alternate, and deeply lobed with narrow segments Stems: Dense, fleshy, and succulent-like National Park Service.

Flowers: Small, white, five-petaled blooms in spring and summer, often at leaf Fruits:

Leathery capsules containing 40–60 seeds .

Root system: Extensive taproot (up to 20–25 feet deep) with lateral roots spreading up to 20 feet in radius

Habitat and Spread

African rue thrives in dry, disturbed areas such as roadsides, rangelands, and desertified fields nmweeds.taosswcd-nm.gov. It tolerates drought, alkaline, and saline soils National Park Service+1. It spreads both by seeds (up to 1,000 per plant) and root fragments, aided by animals, vehicles, and water flow Corteva Agriscience.

Toxicity

Highly toxic to humans and livestock (cattle, horses, sheep)

Toxic compounds: Alkaloids in seeds, fruits, and leaves; dry leaves are less toxic .

Symptoms in animals: Trembling, incoordination, hemorrhaging in heart and liver .

Lethal dose: Seeds/fruit ~0.15% of body weight; young leaves ~1.0% .

Caution: Never eat; ingestion can cause severe illness or death

Ecological Impact

African rue is an invasive noxious weed in the Southwest U.S. (AZ, NM, CA, NV, TX, UT, and beyond) It outcompetes native plants, produces allelopathic chemicals that inhibit growth of other vegetation, and can dominate rangelands

Management

Control is difficult without herbicide or mechanical removal. Prevention includes avoiding seed or root fragment movement, and prompt removal of infestations Corteva Agriscience+1.

In summary: African rue is a drought-tolerant, invasive, and poisonous plant that poses serious risks to livestock and humans. It is a major concern in the Southwestern U.S. and should be managed aggressively to prevent spread.