

# Onionweed (*Asphodelus fistulosus* L.)

Onionweed is an aggressive invasive weed in the United States with significant infestations in Arizona and New Mexico. Onionweed findings have also been reported in California and Texas. In pastures and rangeland, onionweed develops populations that

exclude grasses and desirable forage species. This federally regulated weed poses a serious environmental and agricultural threat.

For more information on the APHIS noxious weeds program, please visit

[www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/weeds/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/weeds/index.shtml).

## Description

**Plant:** Dark green in color and grows 12 to 30 inches tall and 15 inches wide.



Figure 1: Onionweed often spreads from horticultural plantings or disturbed areas near gravel pits, where the seeds shower down into the gravel.



Figure 2: Flowering occurs between late winter and early spring.

**Leaves:** Numerous smooth, nearly cylindrical hollow leaves. Similar in appearance to onion leaves but lacks the onion scent and taste. The leaves are much shorter than the flowering stem and emerge from the base.

**Stem:** Produces one to several stiff upright flower stem(s) up to 2 1/2 feet tall and branched.

**Flowers:** About three-fourths of an inch across with six petal parts, each white to pink with a brown or reddish stripe along the center. Flowers alternate along the branches.

**Fruits:** Spherical in shape; divided into three segments.

**Seeds:** Brown or black triangular, one-eighth inch long, wrinkled, pitted and three or six per fruit.

**Roots:** Thickened root crowns with many fibrous roots and no developed bulb.



**Figure 3:** Seeds germinate in the late summer and fall.



**Figure 4:** The spread of onionweed is mainly through the dispersal of its seeds on vehicles, machinery, animals, and water in open channels.

**Origin:** It is native to the Mediterranean region and from western Asia to northern India.

**Habitat:** Onionweed is found in roadsides, pastures, waste places, disturbed areas, grasslands, and suburban settings. It is drought resistant and prefers sandy or gravelly soils.

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