

Amaranthus spinosus

Spiny amaranth, pigweed

Amaranthus spinosus L.

Family: Amaranthaceae

Description: Shrubby annual herb with striated stems to 5 ft long. Stems succulent, often reddish; pair of spines in leaf axils. Leaves alternate, ovate, somewhat triangular, to 5 inches long by 2 inches wide, veins raised beneath. Sometimes leaves have a white chevron pointing toward the apex. Flower heads green in leaf axils and on tail-like terminal spikes which are sometimes branched. One plant can produce 235,000 seeds. A common weed in row crops, field crops, pastures in the tropics and subtropics. [There are several other species of amaranths in Hawai'i which resemble spiny amaranth but without the spines. The most common amaranth in Hawai'i is *A. viridis* L., slender amaranth, which lacks the spines and has leaves that are notched at the apex.] *Amarantos* is Greek for unfading, in reference to the color of the inflorescence of some species of this genus; *spinosus*, spiny; *viridis*, green^(5, 26, 70).

Distribution: From Asia, now widely distributed throughout the tropics and warm temperate regions. Occurs in Asia from Japan to Indonesia to India, the Pacific islands and Australia, Africa, the Americas, and Hawai'i. Dry to mesic areas. Infests many crops and orchards. Common in non-cropland. In pastures, it often occurs around water troughs. Introduced into Hawai'i by 1928^(26, 70).



Environmental impact: Spines hinder workers in cropland and pastures and foresters and hikers in natural areas. Amaranth responds to nitrogen. In 1973, 39 dairy cows fed green chop contaminated with amaranth fertilized with high-nitrate manure died⁽²⁶⁾.

Management: Sensitive to hormone type herbicides, especially when young. Sensitive to glyphosate.