

The Continual War on Weeds

One of our most difficult battles to control weeds is against the Chamberbitter weed. This tropical plant loves hot weather and looks like a mimosa tree in miniature.



Controlling it is difficult because it is tough, grows fast, is drought tolerant, and will flower and produce abundant seeds in just 2 weeks. The yellow, ball-like seeds of *Phyllanthus urinaria* develop under the leaves. The seed capsules explode and hurl seeds in many directions away from the

plant, allowing it to spread over a large area.

It takes a multi-prong approach to even get the weed down to manageable levels:

- 1) Mechanical controls: Persistent pulling by hand helps, but it is prone to breaking off at the soil level and will survive even though there are no below-ground bulbs or rhizomes to re-sprout.
- 2) Cultural controls: Deep mulching (around 3 inches) will help stop light from reaching the seeds and prevent germination.
- 3) Chemical controls: The common pre-emergent herbicides most gardeners use early when temperatures are around 52 °F are ineffective on Chamberbitter weed since it germinates in very warm soil in the 70 °F range to germinate. An additional application when it is hot and dry is required. Several applications (7 to 10 days apart) of a post-emergent herbicide are usually required, also. Even glyphosate (which kills nearly everything it touches) has to be used several times to control it. No herbicide will knock it out quickly and permanently, so prepare for a continual battle.

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