Know your poison plants: characteristics of poison plants of the genera Oxylobium and Gastrolobium

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Cover Picture

This issue of the Journal of Agriculture features another article in the series on poison plants of Western Australia currently being printed in the Journal.

This month's cover, by staff artist Bob Steed, draws attention to major characteristics of this group, using York Road poison, one of the best known of the poison plants, as an example.

The text and drawing on this page show what to look for in a suspected poison plant.

KNOW YOUR POISON PLANTS

Characteristics of poison plants of the genera Oxylobium and Gastrolobium

FLOWERS: Flowers are yellow, yellow and red to orange, or sometimes red. They are never blue or purple. They are borne on flowering stalks or "racemes" and arranged in pairs, threes or fours in the same manner as the leaves. The racemes are terminal (at the ends of the shoots) or if they arise from the leaf axils, they are elongated so that they protrude above the foliage. An exception is heart leaved poison.

BRACTS: Leaf-like organs known as bracts envelop the flowers in the bud stage but fall off as the buds mature.

STIPULES: These are hair-like or bristle-like appendages, one pair to each leaf, on either side of the leaf stalks. They often fall off before the leaf reaches maturity.

LEAVES: The leaves are opposite each other along the stems, or in threes or fours, arising from the same point or node.

OVARIES: The ovary (immature pod at the time of flowering) is stalked and nearly always covered with fine, silky hairs.