

Goatsrue

Galega officinalis Pea Family

Identification Tips

- Perennial herbaceous plant
- Reaches up to 4 feet tall
- Multiple hollow, tubular, upright stems from vigorous crown and deep taproot
- Alternate leaves with 13-21 leaflets
- Leaves lack tendrils but have leaf tip stipules (hair-like structure at leaf tip)
- Purple, blue, or white pea-like flowers in clusters at stem end

Biology

Flowers June to October. Reproduces by seed; one plant can produce up to 15,000 seedpods. Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, rain, animals, and human activity. They remain viable in the soil for at least 5-10 years.

Impacts

Stems and leaves contain a poisonous alkaloid. Ingestion is fatal to people, sheep, and cattle. Displaces native and beneficial plants. Forms monocultures in wetlands, limiting food and nesting resources for native wildlife.

Distribution

Limited distribution in King County. Tends to grow in wetlands and marshy areas, but has been found along roadsides and in open fields. Prefers full sun, but will tolerate minimal shade.

What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to eradicate goatsrue from all areas in the county. Do your part by checking for this noxious weed on your property.

Control Methods

Best results come from using a combination of the control methods listed below and actively monitoring for any new growth. Goatsrue forms dense crowns capable of regenerating for several seasons. It also produces a long-lived seed bank in the soil. The key to success is sustained control over many years to deplete the seed bank.

Manual:

For small sites with few plants, dig up plants, being careful to remove as much root as possible so the plants will not resprout. This method can be highly labor-intensive; to be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so that no new seeds are produced.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program: **206-477-WEED** kingcounty.gov/weeds

**Class A Noxious Weed:
Eradication Required**



Introduced from the Middle East as a livestock forage plant, goatsrue proved to be unpalatable and toxic.



Flowers range from white, to blue, to purple.



Leaves have 13-21 leaflets and no tendrils on the leaf tips.

Mechanical:

Mowing, clipping, and cutting aren't recommended on their own; goatsrue will flower and produce seeds even when cut short. To be effective, mechanical measures must be followed with herbicide treatment when plants regrow. However, seed pods can be clipped and disposed of to help prevent the spread of seeds in areas undergoing eradication work.

Chemical:

Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label. Selective broadleaf foliar herbicides with active ingredient dicamba, 2,4-D, aminopyralid or a combination are effective. These herbicides are selective and won't harm grasses. Apply herbicide in early summer, preferably during the bud stage and before goatsrue is flowering. Repeat the application in the fall. When using foliar herbicides, do not cut the plants until they are completely dead, which can take 2 weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial, and government agency users.

For more information, contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.

Could be confused with:

Native wild licorice (*Glycyrrhiza lepidota*) is commonly found in meadows, pastures, ditches, and along riverbanks.

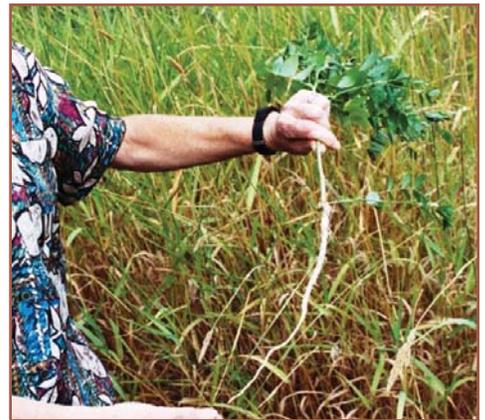
Goatsrue closely resembles wild licorice, a plant that is native to Washington. The root of wild licorice is sweet and has been an important food source for Native Americans. You can distinguish between the two plants primarily by their stems: goatsrue plants have hollow stems, while wild licorice stems are solid. Wild licorice also has bur-like seedpods with hooked bristles. Goatsrue has narrow, smooth seedpods.



Wild licorice looks very similar to goatsrue, but is generally shorter (3 feet tall) with solid stems.



Wild licorice has bur-like seedpods with hooked bristles.



Goatsrue has a deep taproot. Be careful to remove as much of it as possible so that the plant doesn't resprout.



Goatsrue displaces native and beneficial plants, and its leaves and stems are poisonous.



Goatsrue has narrow, smooth seedpods. One plant can produce up to 15,000 seedpods.