

Tansy Ragwort

Senecio jacobaea Sunflower Family

Identification Tips

- Young plants have basal rosette of ruffled leaves
- Mature plants produce leafy flowering stalks, generally 2 to 4 feet tall
- Leaves are dark green on top, whitish-green underneath, with deeply cut, blunt-toothed lobes with a ragged, ruffled appearance
- Flowers are daisy-like with 13 yellow ray petals and yellow-orange center
- Often confused with common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), which has button-like flowers with no petals and flattened, fern-like leaves (See back).

Biology

Generally biennial, with flowers in the second year. Up to 150,000 seeds per plant; seeds spread by wind, mowing or carried on animals. Seeds remain viable in the soil for over 10 years. Flowers June to October, forming seeds starting in August. Will flower again later in season if damaged, grazed, or cut.

Impacts

Poisonous to cattle, horses, some goats, pets and people. Can be fatal. Symptoms include swelling, inflammation of membranes, diarrhea, blood in feces, rough coat and excessive fluid in body. Liver damage can occur. Displaces quality forage plants due to its highly aggressive growth. Toxic when fresh or dry. Can contaminate hay crops.

Distribution

Originally from Europe, now widespread in the western United States. Found county-wide, with heavy concentrations in southern and eastern rural King County and on Vashon Island. Likes full sun and open sites with moderately moist to dry soils. Quickly invades newly disturbed areas, such as roadsides and heavily-grazed pastures.

What You Can Do

Help us stop the spread of this dangerous weed. Check your property and nearby roads regularly for flowering plants. By stopping seed production and eliminating existing plants, we can keep this toxic plant from harming animals. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Program if you see tansy ragwort on roads or neighboring properties, especially where there are horses or other animals grazing.

Control Methods

If you find tansy ragwort on your property, choose one or a combination of the following control methods. Most methods need to be applied over several years to be successful due to the long-lived seeds in the soil.

**Class B Noxious Weed:
Control Required**



Young tansy ragwort plants have basal rosettes of ruffled leaves.



Mature plants 2-4 feet tall with leafy, flowering stalks.



Leaves ruffled, deeply cut with blunt-toothed lobes.

Questions?

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

Prevention:

Watch for weeds in fill dirt, hay and seed from outside your area; clean vehicles and equipment regularly. Check for rosettes (young plants) in the spring. Re-seed bare areas in fields and pastures.

Manual:

Dig up the whole plant including roots. Easiest to pull when in bud. Flowers will go to seed after pulling, so bag and discard any stalks with flowers. Do not put flowering or seeding stems in yard waste. Burning is not recommended due to toxicity of plant and because heat can cause plants to form seeds.

Mechanical:

Tillage may be effective for large areas but may initially expose more seeds for germination. Mowing can stimulate crown growth and side roots.

Caution: plants will flower again after mowing.

Cultural:

Good pasture management keeps out unwanted plants. Re-seeding with site-appropriate pasture grasses can establish competition and reduce tansy ragwort seed germination.

Chemical:

Herbicide treatments may help control large infestations. **Follow label application directions including grazing and environmental restrictions.** Good control is obtained by spraying rosettes in the spring and again in the fall with products that are systemic and selective so that they will not harm grasses. Selective herbicides that are effective include dicamba, 2,4-D, triclopyr and aminopyralid. Glyphosate is non-selective and will kill grass but can be used where weeds are dense or where damage to grasses is not a concern.

Follow all regulations when applying herbicides near sensitive areas and their buffers. In some cases, this will require a permit or special license. Do not cut plants right before or after application in order to allow the systemic herbicide to take effect. Keep livestock away from sprayed plants for 1-2 weeks or as directed by the label, whichever is longer. Livestock can be attracted to the sprayed plants, which become more palatable as they wilt. For more information, contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.



Daisy-like flowers are found on tansy ragwort, usually with 13 petals.



Tansy ragwort is toxic to livestock, pets, and people. Eating it can lead to illness or even death.

Could be confused with:

Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) is a widespread noxious weed that often grows with tansy ragwort.

Unlike tansy ragwort, livestock avoid this strong-smelling plant. Common tansy is easily identified by yellow, button-like flower heads without petals; fern-like leaves and tough, horizontal roots. Control is not required for common tansy, but it is recommended as part of natural area restoration or pasture improvement projects.



Common tansy looks like tansy ragwort from a distance, but up close its fern-like leaves are distinct.



Button-like flowers of common tansy.