Tansy Ragwort

Jacobaea vulgaris

CLASS B
Non-Designate

Key Identification

Tansy ragwort has a rosette of dark green, finely lobed leaves. As it matures, it grows coarse, purplish-tinted stems up to six feet tall, with smaller, hairy-backed leaves alternating along the stem. In late summer to fall, it produces clusters of yellow flowers with both disk and ray petals, about 0.5 inches long. Its wind-dispersed seeds, equipped with hair-like tufts, enable rapid spread.

Impacts

Highly invasive, tansy ragwort outcompetes native plants, reducing forage availability by up to 50% in pastures and rangelands. It releases chemicals that inhibit vegetation growth and disrupts soil microbial diversity. The plant's toxic alkaloids, especially in flowers, are lethal to livestock, causing liver damage and poisoning when ingested, even in contaminated hay. With each plant producing up to 150,000 seeds, it spreads aggressively.

Control Methods

Effective management requires removing plants by hand, ensuring the entire root system is extracted. Flowering plants should be bagged and placed in the trash to prevent seed dispersal. Mowing is ineffective as it encourages regrowth. Preventative measures such as maintaining healthy grasslands and avoiding overgrazing can limit spread.

Disposal

Plants should be bagged and placed in the trash or burned. DO NOT COMPOST. Seeds can remain viable in compost or yard waste. Proper containment and destruction of plant material are essential to controlling its spread.

To learn more about our program, free noxious weed disposal, or report noxious weeds, please visit our webpage.

www.kcowa.us/noxiousweeds

Priority Noxious Weeds of Kitsap County

What Are Noxious Weeds?

Noxious weeds are invasive, non-native plants that threaten the environment, agriculture, and public health. In Washington, noxious weeds are categorized into three classes based on their distribution and management strategies.

Class A species are non-native and not yet widespread; by law, they must be eradicated to prevent further spread.

Class B species are established in parts of the state, with control required in regions where they are not yet common (designate), and containment prioritized where they are already widespread (non-designate).

Class C species are generally well-established or of particular concern to agriculture, and local weed boards have the discretion to require control, provide education, or offer technical assistance based on local needs.

What is a Priority Weed?

The Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Board chose Giant hogweed, Poison hemlock, and Tansy ragwort as local priority species due to their high toxicity and threat to human and livestock health. The program will place a special emphasis on outreach, education, and control efforts for priority species. The board may change or select additional priority species at their discretion.

Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*

Key Identification

Giant hogweed is a towering invasive plant, growing 10 to 15 feet tall. It features large, umbrella-like clusters of small white flowers up to 2 feet in diameter, blooming from late spring to midsummer. Its hollow stems, 2 to 4 inches wide, are marked with purple blotches and bristles. The deeply lobed leaves can reach up to 5 feet wide and alternate along the stem. In late summer, the plant dies back to its roots, leaving behind its distinctive, ridged oval fruits.

Impacts

Giant hogweed threatens both ecosystems and human health. Most concerning is its toxic sap, which contains furocoumarins that cause severe burns and blistering upon sun exposure, leading to long-lasting scars. It outcompetes native plants, reducing biodiversity, particularly in riparian areas. Its shallow root system contributes to soil erosion along stream banks.

Control Methods

Managing giant hogweed requires extreme caution due to its toxic sap. Manual removal involves digging up the plant and cutting the roots at least 6 inches deep to prevent regrowth. Herbicides are effective, especially on younger plants, but require follow-up for at least three years to ensure eradication. While some livestock can graze on it safely, its size and health risks make it a persistent problem. Avoid mowing or weed whacking, as this can release sap.

Disposal

Proper disposal is crucial to prevent spread and exposure. Removed plants should be bagged and placed in the trash. Always wear protective gear when handling giant hogweed to minimize health risks.

Poison Hemlock *Conium maculatum*

Key Identification

Poison hemlock is a tall plant growing 3 to 10 feet high, with hollow, hairless stems marked by distinctive purple spots. It produces umbrella-shaped clusters of small white flowers, each about 2 to 2.5 inches across, in spring. The finely divided, fern-like leaves are triangular, 8 to 16 inches long, with veins running to the tips of the teeth. The plant has a long, white, fleshy root and emits a foul odor when crushed. It follows a two-year life cycle, forming a rosette in the first year before flowering in the second.

Impacts

Poison hemlock is highly toxic, with all parts containing lethal alkaloids that pose a serious risk to humans and animals if ingested. Each plant can produce over 30,000 seeds that remain viable in soil for years, spreading easily via wind, water, animals, and human activity. It grows aggressively in moist areas such as stream banks, roadsides, and wet meadows, forming dense stands that outcompete native vegetation. Its rapid spread and toxicity make it a dangerous invasive species.

Control Methods

Managing poison hemlock requires caution due to its toxicity. Hand-pulling is effective before the plant sets seed, but gloves must be worn to avoid skin irritation. Mowing in spring kills second-year plants, while a second mowing in late summer helps control seedlings.

Disposal

Proper disposal is critical to prevent further spread. Plants should be bagged and removed from the site before they produce seeds. Never compost poison hemlock, as its seeds remain viable for years. After handling, wash tools and clothing thoroughly to avoid accidental exposure.