



Tansy Ragwort

Jacobaea vulgaris (Aka Stinking Willie, Staggerwort, Tansy Butterweed)

Provincial Designation:
Prohibited Noxious



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Overview:

Tansy Ragwort is a biennial or perennial in the sunflower family. Although normally short-lived, plants may remain in the rosette stage for several years if damaged or subjected to intense competition.¹ Tansy Ragwort is native to Europe, Asia and Siberia and is thought to have been introduced to Canada in the 1850s in ship's ballast² and as a medicinal herb. It has since spread mostly as an impurity in hay.³

Tansy Ragwort is an aggressive plant that quickly establishes on disturbed sites.⁴ In Prince Edward Island, it has reduced pasture yields by 50%.² The weed also invades woodlands, decreasing biodiversity. Evidence suggests that it can release toxins into the soil, harming nearby plants.³ Alkaloids within the plant also make it toxic to livestock, causing irreversible liver damage. Cattle and horses typically do not graze it but can be poisoned by contaminated hay or silage.⁴

Habitat:

Tansy Ragwort prefers sites with full sun to partial shade and well-drained, medium to light soils.³ The plant is generally absent in areas with a high water table.² In Eastern Canada it is most commonly found in pastures, hay fields, waste places, roadsides and forest edges.²

Identification:

Stems: One-several erect stems are 0.2-1.2 m in height.⁵ Stems are often purplish and many-branched near the tips.³

Leaves: Rosette leaves are stalked, dark-green, 7-20 cm long with deeply indented and blunt toothed lobes giving them a ruffled or ragged appearance. Upper leaves are similar in shape but much smaller in size and stalkless. Both types of leaves are somewhat hairy on the underside.⁴

Flowers: Heads of usually 13 yellow ray and numerous yellow disc flowers are located in flat-topped clusters.² The bracts surrounding each head are black-tipped and in a single row.⁵

Seeds: Two forms of ribbed fruits (achenes)

are produced. Those from disc flowers are hairy while the ones produced by rays are smooth.⁶ Both forms are rectangular, with a white cluster of hairs (pappus) at the top and approximately 3 mm in length.⁵

Prevention:

The best way to avoid Tansy Ragwort is to monitor pastures for new populations.⁵ If detected; plants should be hand-pulled taking care to remove the root. Remnants of root left behind will re-sprout to form new plants.⁴ Plants already in flower must be carefully bagged and burned.³ Forage seed can be a source of new infestations. Buying certified seed will reduce spread since Tansy Ragwort is listed as a prohibited noxious weed in the Canada Seeds Act.⁷

Control:

Cultural: Densely seeded pastures deter Tansy Ragwort because its seedlings are poor competitors.² Covering bare sites with mulch will also help to prevent germination of the weed.⁴

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Tansy Ragwort (Continued)

Grazing: Sheep are able to consume Tansy Ragwort without any ill effects and have been used extensively in New Zealand for control.⁶

Mechanical: Mowing is not recommended. It will prevent seed production but it will also cause plants to develop multiple crowns and a perennial habit.⁶

Chemical: 2,4-D, Aminopyralid (alone or in a product combination with 2,4-D), Dicamba, Hexazinone, MCPA, and Mecoprop (in a product combination with 2,4-D & Dicamba) are registered for use on tansy ragwort. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: The host-range testing of a cold hardy Swiss strain of *Longitarsus jacobaeae*, a root-feeding beetle has been completed. A different strain of this agent is already well-established on the lower mainland in BC but has yet to survive a transfer to the more variable seasons experienced in the interior. A petition for importation into Canada was approved in 2011. A field release was made in the Okanagan in May 2011⁸.



Foliage

Richard Old, XID Services, Inc., Bugwood.org



Seedlings

Utah State University Archive, Utah State University, Bugwood.



Fruits

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Plant

Richard Old, XID Services, Inc., Bugwood.org



USDA PLANTS Database, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database, Bug-



Infestation

Eric Coombs, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

REFERENCES

- 1 Nova Scotia Noxious Weeds – Tansy Ragwort <http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/rir/weeds/Tansy.shtml>
- 2 Bain, J.F. 1991. The biology of Canadian weeds. 96. *Senecio jacobaea* L. Can. J. Plant Sci. 71: 127-140
- 3 *Senecio jacobaea* and *vulgaris* – Tansy Ragwort and Common Groundsel <http://www.goert.ca/documents/S.jacobaea.pdf>
- 4 Tansy Ragwort – *Senecio jacobaea* http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_info/written_findings/Senecio_jacobaea.html
- 5 T.I.P.S. Factsheet # 15 Tansy Ragwort http://www.invasiveplantcouncilbc.ca/publications/TIPS/Tansy_Ragwort_TIPS.pdf
- 6 Mitich, L. 1995. Intriguing World of Weeds: Tansy Ragwort. Weed Tech. 9:402-404
- 7 Canada Seeds Act – Weed Seeds Order <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca>
- 8 <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/plants/biocontrol/screenagents.htm#tansyragwort>