

Houndstongue

Cynoglossum officinale L.



Plant Family: Boraginaceae

Other Names: Gypsy flower, cockleburs, bur bush, stick-tight

Similar Species:

Weed Classification: Priority 2B

Native to: Eurasia

Is This Weed Toxic? Yes

Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org

Identification

Houndstongue flowers range from dark and light pink to burgundy and purple with 5 wide rounded petals. The leaves are where it gets its name because they are reminiscent of a dog's tongue, although the most recognizable and likely the most familiar aspect of it is the hundreds to thousands of burrs each plant produces once it reaches maturity. These burrs commonly attach themselves to people, pets, and livestock. When this happens, remove and discard the burrs in a sealed bag to prevent spread. This plant is a biennial, meaning the first season of growth results in a rosette of leaves with carbohydrates stored in the large taproot for winter survival, and the second season is when flowering and seeding occur.

Treatment

Houndstongue responds very well to hand-pulling, although effort needs to be placed into extracting as much of the root as possible – at least to below the root crown. Pulling will be much easier and more successful if applied when the ground is moist. Although this weed generally doesn't grow in thick patches it is still highly invasive.

Mowing and cutting are not effective methods of weed control because the plant will likely bloom and seed regardless.

Prescribed burning is not condoned since the cons outweigh the pros; although seeds remaining on plant skeletons may be destroyed, the seeds on the soil surface will not be, and the destruction of competitive forbs in addition to exposing bare soil can encourage more weed growth rather than prevent it.

Grazing is more likely to contribute to the spread of houndstongue rather than to the control due to the plants association with ground disturbance and its tendency of seeds to stick in fur and fleece. Additionally, houndstongue has the potential to poison grazing livestock and wildlife.

Several varieties of herbicide are available to manage houndstongue. Spring applications generally provide better control than fall applications. When utilizing herbicide consider adding a surfactant to increase the likelihood of an evenly applied application.

Kedzie-Webb, Susan, and Roger Sheley. "Houndstongue: Identification, Biology and Integrated Management." *MontGuide* (1997): n. pag. *MSUExtension.org*. Montana State University, Aug. 2009. Web. 01 Jan. 2017.

"Plants - Houndstongue." *National Invasive Species Information Center*. USDA, n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2017.



Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org, Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org, Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org, Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org