

Tansy Ragwort

Senecio jacobaea



David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

Plant Family: Sunflower (Asteraceae)

Other Names: Staggerwort

Similar Species: Arrowleaf groundsel, St. Johnswort, Canada goldenrod, common tansy

Weed Classification: Priority 2A

Native to: Northern Africa, Asia, and Europe

Is This Weed Toxic? Yes, to both humans and livestock

Identification

Tansy ragwort, although not common in Flathead County, should be taken very seriously if spotted due to its toxic qualities to people, livestock, and wildlife, and its ability to spread quickly. Always wear gloves when working with this plant due to its toxicity. It is 2 – 4 feet tall with a single branching stemmed plant, many small yellow daisy-like flowers, and frilly, fancy lettuce-like leaves. The stem is woody and frequently a brownish purple color. It tends to be found in logged areas, in forests, along roadsides and trails, and in open pastures with well-drained soil. Tansy ragwort can be found in patches or alone.

Treatment

Tilling breaks the roots and base of this weed, which are capable of regenerating, making it an unacceptable means of control. Soil disruption caused by tilling results in an optimal environment for ragwort growth and reproduction, although tilling can be used successfully if combined with herbicide management and followed by revegetating with desired competitive plants.

Mowing is an ineffective control method for tansy ragwort because when clipped, this plant dramatically speeds up its vegetative production. Although mowing when plants bolt and prior to flowering may temporarily reduce seed population, the plants will survive and flower again.

Thorough hand-pulling and digging is an effective method to temporarily reduce tansy ragwort numbers in small-scale infestations, or on plants that persist after herbicide treatments. Removing rosettes and flowering plants will reduce seed production but will likely need to be repeated because regrowth will occur unless all of the rooting body is removed and discarded. Remember to ALWAYS wear gloves when working with this plant.

Burning has been reported as an effective method in killing both plants and seeds, although it should always be combined with other control methods because it can damage desirable plants and create a favorable environment for increased infestation.

If utilized properly, grazing can be helpful with tansy ragwort control. Continuous grazing is likely to increase infestation, while rotational grazing can be highly useful in controlling green growth and seed production. This plant is TOXIC to cattle and horses and cannot be grazed by these animals. Sheep have proven to provide excellent weed control when used in regular rotational grazing and combined with other methods of control.

Herbicides are going to be the most effective if applied when the plant is actively growing in the rosette stage, either in spring or mid-fall, and will be less effective if used after the plants have bolted and produced flowers. Reapplication is going to be required when managing this weed. Caution should be used when utilizing both herbicides and grazing since some herbicides cause this plant to be more palatable to livestock that would normally avoid it, raising the risk of poisoning.

Providing healthy competitive forbs is crucial when combating this noxious weed. If tansy ragwort invades irrigated pastures and cropland, adding nutrients, maintaining proper grazing management practices, and utilizing carefully planned irrigation management will help stimulate the competitiveness of the forage crop, thereby helping to prevent re-establishment of the ragwort.

Montana, USDA NRCS Montana State Office. "TANSY RAGWORT *Senecio Jacobaea L.*" *USDA NRCS Plant Guide* (2009): n. pag. *Plants.usda.gov*. Usda. Web. 01 Feb. 2017.
"Washington State." *Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board*. NWCB, n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2017.



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