

Ecological Impact

Common tansy has been reported as unpalatable and somewhat poisonous to humans and livestock. It is also an alternate host for plant viruses (Royer and Dickinson 1999). It can grow along irrigation ditches and streams and restrict water flow (CWMA 2004).

Biology and Invasive Potential

Common tansy reproduces vigorously by both seed and rootstalks. Each plant is capable of producing over 50,000 seeds (Whitson et al. 2000, Royer and Dickinson 1999) and spreading quite aggressively by vegetative means (Plants for a Future 2002). It is generally restricted to



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

disturbed sites, although it has been observed growing in undisturbed beach meadows in Haines, Alaska (M. Shephard, pers. comm. 2004). Plants lack a well developed pappus and therefore are unlikely to be wind dispersed. Common tansy has been used and distributed as an ornamental and medicinal remedy, and it has escaped and become widely established. It is also a potential seed contaminant (CWMA 2004, GRIN 2004). It is known to germinate in vegetated areas (SWEPIC 2004) and is adapted to all soil textures. It requires well-drained moist soil but can tolerate acidic, neutral, and basic soils. It is not shade-tolerant (Plants for a Future 2002). Common tansy is listed as a noxious weed in Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, Wyoming, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Distribution and Abundance

Common tansy is a native of Europe and Western Asia and has become established in almost all of the United States and Canadian provinces. It has been reported from multiple locations in southcentral and southeast Alaska (AKEPIC Database 2004). This plant is generally found along roadsides, waste areas, streambanks, and pastures outside of Alaska (Whitson et al. 2000) and has established in beach meadows of Haines, Alaska.

Management

Common tansy is an aggressive weed that is difficult to control (CWMA 2004, Plants for a Future 2002). Hand-pulling without a shovel can be difficult due to the extensive rhizomes, and it will not eradicate an infestation but may prevent its spread. This also applies to mowing several times per year. Gloves and protective clothing should be used to keep the plant's toxins off of skin. Herbicide application is generally recommended and is most effective between the early flower bud and full bloom stage.

Notes

Common tansy has been used for a wide variety of medicinal remedies and as an insect repellent. It is toxic to humans and livestock when consumed in large quantities. Before the invention of embalming, tansy was used to line coffins before burying the dead because of its ability to repel vermin. More recently, chemical analysis has shown that common tansy contains compounds that can repel insects and inhibit growth of bacteria and fungi.



US Geological Survey photo by Chris McKee

Western Salsify



Tragopogon dubius Scop.

Alternate names

yellow salsify

Synonyms

Tragopogon dubius Scop. ssp. *major* (Jacq.), *Tragopogon major* Jacq.



Description

Western salsify is a large, taprooted biennial plant that grows 1 to 3 feet high. All parts of the plant contain a milky white juice. Leaves are up to 12 inches long, clasping, alternate, narrow, grass-like, somewhat fleshy, hairless, and light green to bluish-green. Flowerheads, composed of yellow ray florets, measure 1 to 2 1/2 inches across and form at the end of long, hollow stalks. There are 10 to 14 bracts subtending each head that are 1 to 2 inches long and extend beyond the ray florets. Leaves from the previous year are often found at the base of the plant. The fruiting head of western salsify is globe-shaped, 2 1/2 to 4 inches across, and composed of pappus-bearing achenes.



USDA Forest Service photo by Diane Powell, image 1205020 (www.invasive.org)



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Similar Species

Western salsify seedlings can be mistaken for small grass plants. Meadow salsify (*T. pratensis* L.), found throughout Canada, does not have a swollen stem below the flowerhead and has 8 or 9 floral bracts below the flower. No other yellow-flowered compos-

Family: Asteraceae

Western Salsify

ites with milky juice in Alaska have long, narrow bracts or grow as tall as western salsify.

Ecological Impact

Western salsify establishes in sparse herbaceous communities and creates a new vegetation layer. High densities of plants are likely to inhibit growth and recruitment of native forbs and grasses. This species is unpalatable to grazing animals and attractive to many types of pollinating insects (M. Carlson, pers. comm. 2004).



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Biology and Invasive Potential

Western salsify reproduces only by seed. Each plant is capable of producing up to 500 seeds (Royer and Dickinson 1999). It occurs in disturbed sites, including steep slopes and landslides, and can also establish in intact to moderately grazed prairies in Oregon. Seeds have pappus composed of feathery, webbed hairs that are easily and widely dispersed by wind (Royer and Dickinson 1999). This species is a potential seed contaminant (GRIN 2004) and is known as a contaminant in seedmixes for road construction. Western salsify is adapted to all soil textures and pH levels ranging from 6.5 to 7.5. It has low fertility and moisture requirements. It is shade-intolerant and withstands temperatures to -28°F . It does not require cold-stratification for germination (GRIN 2004). Western salsify is listed as an invasive weed in Kentucky, Nebraska, Tennessee, Manitoba, and Ontario.



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

Distribution and Abundance

Western salsify is native to Eurasia and has become established over much of temperate North America. It has been collected from only one site in southcentral Alaska, along

Turnagain Arm between Anchorage and Girdwood (ALA 2004). Outside of Alaska, it is a common weed of cultivated crops, roadsides, and waste areas.

Management

According to Rutledge and McLendon (1996), western salsify is not an aggressive weed and control is seldom necessary. However, in southcentral Alaska, multiple years of hand-pulling have been unsuccessful for eradication.

Notes

Western salsify was introduced from Europe for its large, edible roots. Other common names include oysterplant, goatsbeard, noonflower, and Jerusalem star. Noonflower refers to the showy flowers that open in the morning and close by noon.



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

Scentless False Mayweed



Tripleurospermum perforata
(Merat) M. Lainz

Alternate Names

Scentless mayweed
German chamomile

Synonyms

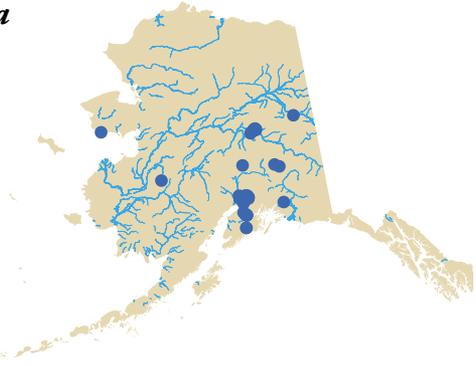
Chamomilla inodora (L.)
Gilib., *Matricaria*
inodora L., *Matricaria*
maritima L. var. *agrestis* (Knaf) Wilmott,
Matricaria maritima L. ssp. *inodora* (L.)
Clapham, *Matricaria perforata* Merat, *Tri-*
pleurospermum inodorum (L.) Schultz-Bip.

Description

Scentless false mayweed is an annual to perennial forb with an extensive fibrous root system. Stems are highly branched and normally over 3 feet tall. Leaves are alternate, 1 to 3 inches long, and divided into numerous narrow, thread-like, branched segments. Leaves are more or less odorless when crushed. Numerous flowerheads are produced from June to September. The flowerhead disc measures 1 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter and is yellow, with white ray florets that are 3/8 to 1 1/2 inches long. Both types of florets are capable of producing seed. The mature seeds have 3 distinctive ridges.

Similar Species

False mayweed (*T. maritima* (L.) W.D. J. Koch ssp. *phaeocephalum* (Rupr.) Hamet-Ahti) is native to



XID Services photo by Richard Old



XID Services photo by Richard Old

the shores of the Bering and Beaufort Seas in Alaska. The involucre bracts of the native species have dark brown margins while those of the introduced species have light brown margins. Scentless false mayweed could also be confused with two other exotic species, stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula* L.) and wild chamomile (*Matricaria recutita* L.), but can be distinguished by its lack of strong odor.

Ecological Impact

Scentless false mayweed seedlings can form very dense stands upon emerging in the spring, thereby reducing seedling growth among other species (NAPPO 2003). This plant is unpalatable to animals, and thus dense stands reduce the quality of forage sites (Parchoma 2004, CWMA 2000). Scentless false mayweed is pollinated by bees and flies (Harris and McClay 2003). It is likely to alter soil moisture and nutrient availability for other species.

Biology and Invasive Potential

Scentless false mayweed reproduces entirely by seeds. Large plants are capable of producing up to a million seeds, and solid stands of scentless false mayweed can produce 1,800,000 seeds per square meter. Seedbanks can be long-lived, with buried seeds remaining viable for at least 15 years (Juras et al. 2004). Scentless false mayweed



XID Services photo by Richard Old

is often associated with disturbed habitats where there is little competition from established vegetation. Periodic disturbance by cultivation, livestock trampling, or flooding promotes the establishment of scentless false mayweed (Juras et al. 2004). Seeds lack pappus or other morphological adaptations for long-distance dispersal but can spread by wind, water, and drifting snow (Juras et al. 2004, Parchoma 2004). Up to 26% of seeds remain viable in dung (NAPPO 2003, Rutledge and McLendon 1996). Seeds are transported with vehicles, contaminated forage, and grain and grass seed (Juras et al. 2004, Parchoma 2004). Seeds are able to germinate under a wide range of temperature and moisture conditions. Most germination occurs at daily temperature from 36.5° to 104°F. Seeds floating on water germinate readily. Germination occurs better under a canopy than on barren soil (Juras et al. 2004). This weed is found in a range of soils including clay, loam, and sand with pH levels ranging from 5.5 to 7.9. It prefers moist organic soils and does not tolerate calcareous soils (Rutledge and McLendon 1996). Scentless false mayweed is listed as noxious in Washington and Saskatchewan. It is considered a weed in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec.

Distribution and Abundance

Outside of Alaska, scentless false mayweed is found in perennial forage crops, pastures, lawns, gardens, and waste



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

areas and also along roadsides, irrigation ditches, shorelines, streams, and pond edges (Juras et al. 2004, Parchoma 2004). In Alaska, it appears to be restricted to areas with recent anthropogenic soil disturbance and little organic soil. The species is native to northern and central Europe and has been introduced to North America and Asia. It can be found in 26 of the northern United States and in all Canadian provinces (NRCS 2005, Juras et al. 2004, NAPPO 2003).

Management

Scentless false mayweed can be difficult to control. It is tolerant of many herbicides. A combination of mowing, tillage, and hand-pulling can be used to control this plant. Biological agents have been released in British Columbia to control this species (Juras et al. 2004, Parchoma 2004), but the presence of a native species in Alaska of the same genus limits the probability of biological control here. According to Harris and McClay (2003), this species tends to occupy recently disturbed sites and does not persist without further disturbance, suggesting that control is seldom necessary.

Notes

Scentless false mayweed originated in Europe. It is found in nearly all crops and particularly cereals. Studies of lentil, mustard, and wheat grain suggest that contaminated grain may be an important dispersal mechanism for this weed.

Brassbuttons

Cotula coronopifolia L.

Alternate Names

waterbuttons, common brass buttons, bachelor's button, brass buttons, buttonweed

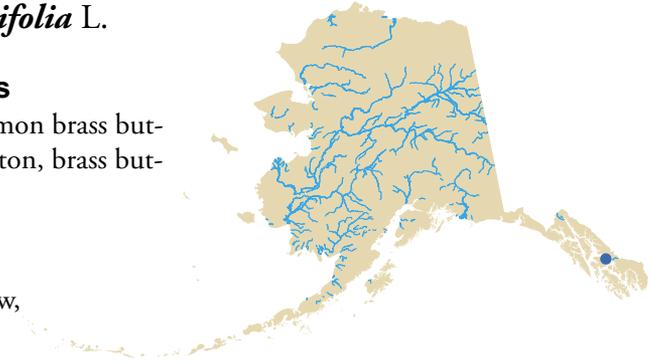
Description

Brassbuttons is a low, decumbent perennial plant in its native subtropical environment. In Europe, the species behaves as an annual plant, dying in the first autumn frost. Plants grow up to 12 inches tall and are aromatic, hairless, and highly branched from the base. Stems are often trailing and root at the nodes. Leaves are 1 to 2 1/2

inches long, oblong, pinnately lobed to entire, and sessile, and the base is sheathed around the stem. Flowerheads are yellow, solitary, and composed only of disc florets. Heads are borne on naked stalks and the involucre bracts are lanceolate or oblong and yellowish.

Similar Species

Common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare* L., included in this book) and pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea* DC., included in this book) have similar flowerheads, but brassbuttons is smaller than the former and found in coastal habitats, unlike the latter. Arctic daisy (*Dendranthema arcticum* (L.) Tzvelev) is a native plant that also occurs along seashores but has white ray florets and wedge-shaped leaves.



USDA NRCS photo by William and Wilma Follette

Management

Brassbuttons can be controlled by hand-pulling or mechanical methods, although it can grow on very soft, deep mud, making infestations nearly inaccessible by foot or boat. Use of herbicides under local conditions has not been investigated.

Notes

A brassy gold dye can be obtained from the whole plant. *Cotula* comes from the Greek word *kotule*, meaning “a small cup” and referring to a hollow at the base of the leaves.

Narrowleaf Hawksbeard

Crepis tectorum L.

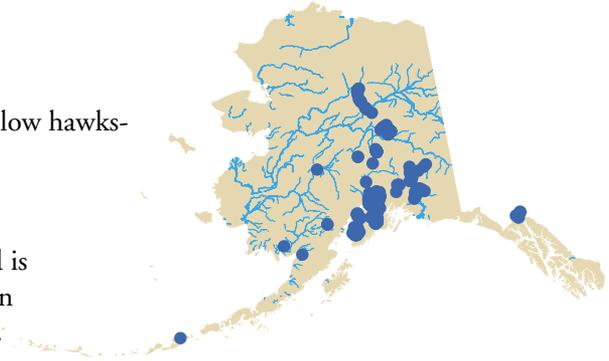
Alternate Names

annual hawksbeard, yellow hawksbeard,

Description

Narrowleaf hawksbeard is an annual plant that can reach a height of 3 feet.

The mature plant has a single stem that is branched, erect, hairless and leafy and grows from a taproot. Basal leaves are stalked, lance-shaped, 4 to 6 inches long, and 1 1/2 inches wide. Stem leaves are alternate and less than 1/2 of an inch wide, and they clasp the stem. Leaf margins often roll under towards the midrib. Involucral bracts are smooth, lacking hairs or fuzz. Flowerheads are 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch wide and composed of 30 to 70 yellow ray florets. The seedheads look like small dandelion seedheads, with a white pappus of numerous white bristles on each seed.



Narrowleaf hawksbeard flowers.

USDA Forest Service photo by
Michael Shephard

Similar Species

Invasive narrow-leaved hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum* L., included in this book) is often confused with narrowleaf hawksbeard. Narrow-leaved hawkweed is an erect perennial plant with numerous yellow flowerheads measuring up to 1 inch across. The floral bracts are dark green to black. Seeds are about 1/8 of an inch long and have a brownish or tawny pappus. Smooth hawksbeard (*Crepis capillaris* (L.) Wallr.) is another exotic species in Alaska that can only be differentiated from narrowleaf hawksbeard with magnification. The native *Crepis* species can be distinguished from the exotics by their smaller stature, for they grow to less

Family: Asteraceae

Narrowleaf Hawksbeard

than 1 foot high.

Ecological Impact

Narrowleaf hawksbeard is a weed of forage crops, pastures, roadsides, and waste areas. It is occasionally a serious weed in fall-sown crops (Royer and Dickinson 1999). Aesthetic impacts are significant because the plants are showy and conspicuous when in flower.



KULAK photo by Paul Brusselen

Smooth hawksbeard.

Biology and Invasive Potential

Each narrowleaf hawksbeard plant is capable of producing over 49,000 seeds (Royer and Dickinson 1999), and it readily colonizes disturbed sites and open areas (Densmore et al. 2001). Seeds are wind-dispersed and no dormant period is required for germination. It is listed as noxious in Minnesota, Alberta, and Manitoba.

Distribution and Abundance

Narrowleaf hawksbeard is primarily limited to cultivated fields, roadsides and waste areas. It is native to Europe and temperate Asia. The species is now found throughout Canada and the northern part of the United States (Royer and Dickinson 1999), including a number of locations across Alaska. The first documented occurrence in the state was near Fairbanks in 1974 (ALA 2004).

Management

Narrowleaf hawksbeard is easily pulled up by hand, although several weedings may be necessary to eliminate plants overlooked when they were in the small rosette stage or not yet flower-



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

Narrowleaf hawksbeard.

Family: Asteraceae

Narrowleaf Hawksbeard

ing (Densmore et al. 2001). It can also be controlled by mechanical or chemical methods.

Notes

The genus name *Crepis* comes from the Greek krepis, “a sandal,” and is an ancient plant name. The species name *tectorum* means “of roofs.”



UAF Cooperative Extension Service
photo by Michael Rasy

Narrowleaf hawksbeard.

Spotted Catsear

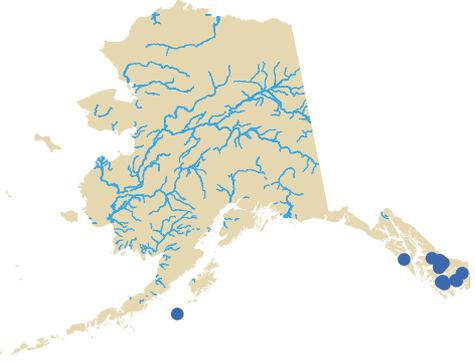
Hypochaeris radicata L.

Alternate names

hairy catsear, false dandelion

Description

Spotted catsear is an herbaceous perennial plant with a basal rosette of dandelion-shaped leaves that are 2 to 8 inches long. Leaves are densely hairy on both sides. There are no leaves on the stems, which can be several simple or sparsely branched and grow 6 to 24 inches high. Flowers have yellow heads, 1 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter, and often have several heads per stem.



KULAK photo by Paul Bussele

Similar Species

Spotted catsear looks similar to other dandelion tribe members, including two other exotic species included in this book: common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* G.H. Weber ex Wiggers ssp. *officinale*) and hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis* L.). Spotted catsear can be distinguished from dandelion by the presence of flower-heads that appear in groups of 3 or 4 at the ends of stems. Hawkbit can be distinguished by the presence of leaves that are smooth and shiny rather than heavily hairy like those of spotted catsear.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Management

It is effective to remove scattered spotted catsear plants with a spade below the rootcrown in early spring as soon as the leaves appear, to a depth of several inches. Badly infested fields should be cultivated for one to 2 years before reseeding. Herbicide treatment provides effective control of this species.

Notes

Spotted catsear is originally from Europe and is very abundant in California. It is also known as gosmore, flatweed, and coast dandelion. The common name comes from the leaves that resemble a cat's ears.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Prickly Lettuce

Lactuca serriola L.

Alternate names

wild lettuce, compass plant, milk thistle, horse thistle, wild opium

Synonyms

L. scariola L.

Description

Prickly lettuce is a biennial plant with a pappus of simple bristles. Stem leaves lack a clasping base. Achenes are beak-shaped. Plants are 2 to 4 feet tall from a large taproot. Stems branch only in the flowering portion and bear numerous yellow flowerheads. Prickles cover the leaf teeth, the back side of the midvein, and the lower half of the stem. Leaves are twisted at the base to lie in a vertical plane clasping the stem with 2 ear-like lobes.

Similar Species

Prickly lettuce can be differentiated from several similar species in Alaska by its prominent prickles along the underside of the leaf mid-vein, which the others lack.

Management

Isolated individuals can be dug up or pulled by hand.

Notes

Cultivated lettuce is another member of this genus, of which there are over 100 species, but only a few of them are native to the Americas. Another common name for prickly lettuce is compass plant, because the bluish-green leaves often twist slightly at their clasping base so that they



XID Services photo by Richard Old

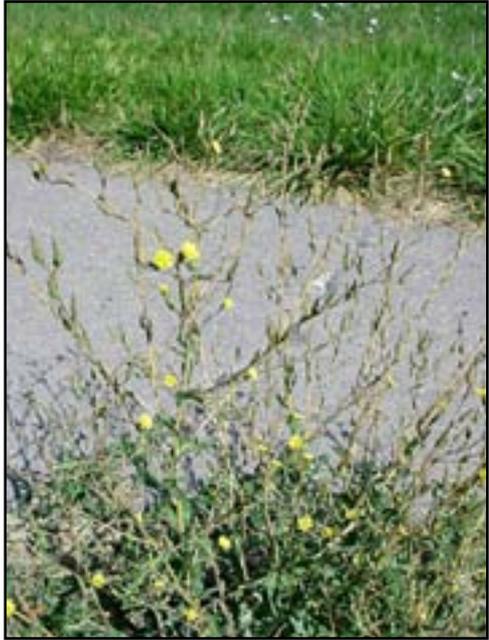
Family: Asteraceae

Prickly Lettuce

mainly face east and west, their edges pointing approximately north and south.



XID Services photo by Richard Old



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Nipplewort

Lapsana communis L.

Description

Nipplewort is an annual plant with branched leafy stems. Leaves are alternate, stalked, and broadly egg-shaped with toothed to lobed margins. Upper leaves lack stalks. Plants are sparsely hairy to hairless and contain milky sap. Flowers are yellow with only ray florets. Achenes are sausage-shaped, curved, hairless, and 1/8 to 3/16 of an inch long with no pappus.

Similar Species

Wild lettuce species (*Lactuca* spp.) can be differentiated from nipplewort by the presence of a crown of bristles or scales (pappus) at the summit of the achene.

Management

Hand-pulling is effective, especially when the plants are young.

Notes

Nipplewort was at one time cultivated as a vegetable. The bracts surrounding the small heads of yellow ray florets are erect and hairless and form the “nipple” in the common name.



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Family: Asteraceae

Nipplewort



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Hawkbit

Leontodon autumnalis L.

Alternate Names

Fall dandelion

Description

Hawkbit is a perennial plant with dandelion-like features. Leaves are deeply lobed, arising from a basal rosette. Flowers are yellow with reddish streaks on the underside of outer florets. The pappus has a single row of leathery hairs.

Similar Species

The tough flowering stem with scale-like leaves distinguishes hawkbit from common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* G.H. Weber ex Wiggers ssp. *officinale*), included in this book), with its hollow flower stem. The flower stalks of spotted catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata* L.), included in this book are also branched and have small scale-like bracts, but the leaves are densely hairy, not smooth and shiny like those of hawkbit.

Management

Little information is available concerning control methods for hawkbit. Refer to other members of the Asteraceae family for possible options.

Notes

Hawkbit is native to Europe.



Norwegian Botanical Association
photo by Norman Hagen



USDA Forest Service photo by Tom Heutte

Pineapple Weed

Matricaria discoidea DC.

Alternate Names

Disc mayweed

Synonyms

Artemisia matricarioides auct. non Less, *Chamomilla suaveolens* (Pursh) Rydb., *Lepidanthus suaveolens* (Pursh) Nutt., *Lepidotheca suaveolens* (Pursh) Nutt., *Matricaria matricarioides* (Less.) Porter, *Matricaria suaveolens* L., *Tanacetum suaveolens* Hook.

Description

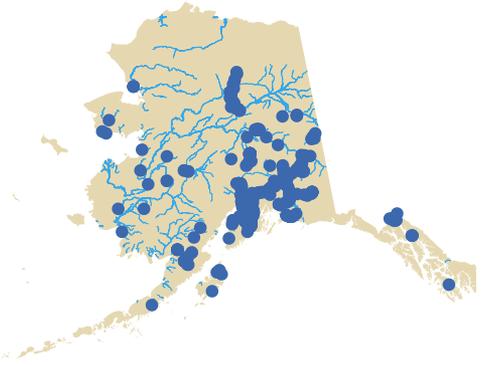
Pineapple weed is a low-branching annual plant with leafy stems up to 1 foot tall but generally less than 6 inches tall. The plant gives off a chamomile scent when crushed. Leaves are alternate and divided several times into narrow segments. Small yellow disc florets are arranged in a cone-shaped head, 3/16 to 3/8 of an inch wide. Ray florets are absent. Each head is surrounded by several overlapping bracts with papery margins. Plants bloom from early spring to autumn.

Similar Species

There are no other diminutive, rayless composite species that may be confused with pineapple weed in Alaska.

Management

Pineapple weed plants are easily pulled up, although several weedings may be necessary (Densmore et al. 2001). Herbi-



National Park Service photo by Penny Baudeur

cides can be effective, but the plant is resistant to some of them.

Notes

Pineapple weed has been used in a decoction for graying hair, in an infusion against spasms and disorders of the stomach, and externally as an antiseptic and vulnerary. The genus name comes from the Latin matrix, meaning “the womb,” because these plants were also used to soothe discomforts associated with menstruation or pregnancy.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Wall Lettuce

Mycelis muralis (L.) Dumort

Synonyms

Lactuca muralis (L.) Fresen.

Description

Wall lettuce is a slender, glabrous, herbaceous plant that can behave as an annual plant on frequently disturbed substrates or as a biennial on more stable substrates. Stems are erect, 2 to 3 feet tall, and branched above and may arise singly or multiply from a fibrous root. The stem surface is glabrous and often glaucous, and it exudes milky juice when broken. Basal and lower stem leaves are 2 1/2 to 7 inches long, 1 to 3 inches wide, glabrous and pinnatifid, with broad, terminal segments and earlike, clasping projections at the leaf base. There are few middle and upper stem leaves, and they are reduced in size. Each flowerhead is comprised of 5 yellow, strap-shaped ray florets. Achenes are approximately 1/8 of an inch long, several-nerved, and black or brown with white pappus. The plant dies back after flowering but produces an overwintering rosette.

Similar Species

Three other lettuce species—prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola* L., included in this book), tall blue lettuce (*L. biennis* (Moench) Fernald), and blue lettuce (*L. tatarica* C.A. Mey.) – are known to occur in Alaska. Prickly lettuce has yellow ray florets like wall lettuce, but they consist of 5 to 12



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

florets and the leaves are prickly. Tall blue lettuce and blue lettuce can be easily distinguished from both species by their bluish to white flowers.

Management

Control options have not been investigated. Wall lettuce may be susceptible to grazing. Kellman (1974) suggested that wall lettuce will not persist on sites with established perennials.

Notes

The raw leaves of wall lettuce are edible and used in salads. It is native to the Mediterranean and western Asia.



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Common Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale G.H. Weber
ex Wiggers ssp. *officinale*

Alternate names

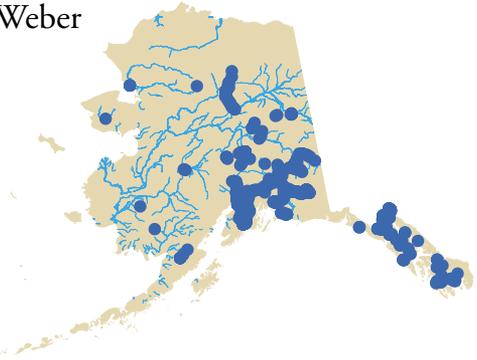
blow ball, faceclock, pee-a-bed,
wet-a-bed, lion's-tooth, canker-
wort, Irish daisy

Synonyms

Taraxacum atroglaucum M.P. Christens.,
Taraxacum campyloides Hagl., *Taraxacum*
croceum auct. non Dahlst., *Taraxacum*
curvidens M.P. Christens., *Taraxacum*
cyclocentrum M.P. Christens., *Taraxacum*
dahlstedtii Lindb. f., *Taraxacum davidssonii*
M.P. Christens., *Taraxacum devians*
Dahlst., *Taraxacum dilutisquameum* M.P.
Christens., *Taraxacum firmum* Dahlst.,
Taraxacum islandiciforme Dahlst., *Taraxa-*
cum kok-saghyz auct. non Rodin, *Taraxa-*
cum officinale G.H. Weber ex Wiggers
var. *palustre* (Lyons) Blytt p.p., *Taraxacum*
pleniflorum M.P. Christens., *Taraxacum retroflexum* Lindb.
f., *Taraxacum rhodolepis* Dahlst., *Taraxacum undulatum*
Lindb. f. & Marklund, *Taraxacum vegans* Hagl., *Taraxacum*
xanthostigma Lindb. f.

Description

Common dandelion can grow from 2 to 20 inches high. Leaves are 2 to 16 inches long, 1/2 to 4 inches broad, and pinnately-lobed to pinnatifid with a large, rounded terminal lobe. Leaves are stalkless. The midrib of the leaf is often hollow and winged near the base. Yellow flowerheads are composed only of ray florets and rise from the basal leaves on hollow stalks. Heads measure 1 to 2 inches across and are surrounded by 2 rows of floral bracts. The whole plant contains a white milky juice.



National Park Service photo by Penny Bauder

Similar Species

The genus *Taraxacum* is a taxonomically confusing group, due to asexual reproduction and local diversification, and has been subject to many divergent interpretations, with hundreds of specific names published. Current taxonomic treatments describe *T. officinale* as encompassing 3 subspecies, 2 introduced in Alaska (ssp. *officinale* and ssp. *vulgare* (Lam.) Schinz & R. Keller) and one native (ssp. *ceratophorum* (Ledeb.) Schinz ex Thellung) in the state (NRCS 2005). The exotic subspecies lack horns on the involucre bracts and have substantially larger heads than all native subspecies and species of Alaskan dandelions. The native subspecies *ceratophorum* often grows in disturbed sites with the introduced subspecies but has horns on the involucre bracts. There are other native *Taraxacum* species that lack horns on involucre bracts, but they are found primarily in undisturbed herbaceous meadows, especially in the alpine zone.



National Park Service photo by Penny Bauder

Management

Hand-pulling is only effective for dandelion control if all rootcrowns are removed, which can be accomplished using an inexpensive, prong-shaped tool (available at garden supply stores) to extract several inches of subsurface material. Dandelion can be easily controlled using herbicides.

Notes

One of the most common weeds in North America, common dandelion has edible leaves, it can be used to make wine, and the milky juice of the roots has medicinal value. Bees use the nectar to make honey, and songbirds eat the seeds.

Family: Asteraceae

Common Dandelion



National Park Service photo by Penny Bauder