



*Senecio vulgaris*

WA – Class C Noxious Weed

## Common Groundsel

Old-Man-In-The-Spring

**Family:** Asteraceae/Compositae

**Origins:** Native to Europe, Groundsel is a plant that is said to follow civilized men and women wherever they settle. The name Groundsel is of old origin, meaning literally, 'ground swallow.'

**Range:** Found throughout much of the U.S. In Washington and Oregon, infestations are more dense west of the Cascades.

**Habitat:** Commonly found in cultivated soil, vegetable and ornamental gardens, pastures, along roadsides, and disturbed areas. It is best adapted to wet environments and nutrient-rich soils. Plants are known to die during extended dry, hot periods.

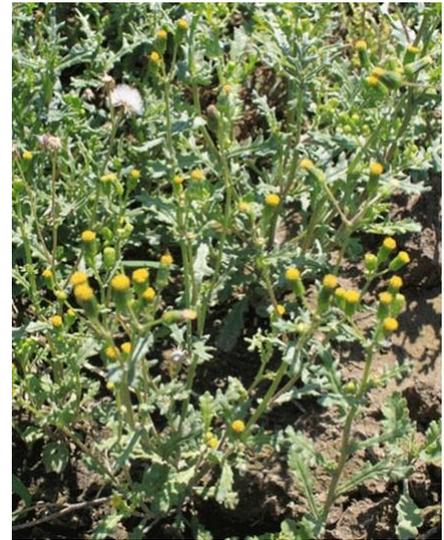
**Impact:** Early-emerging Common Groundsel plants can out-compete later-emerging crop seedlings and reduce their growth, limiting crop production. Common Groundsel can produce 3 to 4 generations per season, generating up to 1 million seeds per plant. Seeds are dispersed by the wind and human or animal interaction. Even after the plant has been pulled or cut down, seeds can still mature and germinate.

**Description:** Common Groundsel is a winter annual or biennial, though it can germinate in any season. Plants have simple or branched upright growth, 6 to 18 inches tall. The stems are succulent, hollow, and branched. Leaves are deeply lobed with toothed margins and are usually smooth but may have light hair. They are alternately arranged on the stem, the lower leaves have a small stalk, and the upper leaves are directly attached to the stem. The lower stems and underside of basal leaves are usually a purplish-color.

Yellow disk flowers are in clusters of many. The green bracts surrounding the flower have conspicuous black tips that distinguish Groundsel from other weeds in the Asteraceae/Compositae family. Plants flower from April to October.

**Common Look-Alikes:** Woodland Groundsel; sometimes mistaken to be Tansy Ragwort.

*\* Common Groundsel is toxic to humans and animals. It contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which can cause irreversible liver damage and possibly death. Sheep and goats have bacteria that detoxify the alkaloids, so they are able to consume large amounts with no ill effects.*



Images: Courtesy of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board.

## Integrated Pest Management - Control Methods

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combines various methods such as mechanical, cultural, biological, and chemical controls to manage pests. IPM offers the possibility of improving the efficiency of pest control while reducing its negative environmental impacts. For more information, see the Cowlitz County Noxious Weed's IPM Resources & Strategy Guide or contact your local Noxious Weed Control Board to develop a customized IPM plan.

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## Non-Herbicide Control

<b>Mechanical</b> (pulling, cutting, digging, etc.)	Small infestations can be dug up or hand-pulled. Shallow tillage in the fall to spring will provide some control. Repeat mowing throughout the year will provide some control if done before flowering.
<b>Cultural</b>	Cultivation provides control if done before flowering. Maintaining healthy, desirable vegetation can prevent Common Groundsel infestations.
<b>Biological</b>	Biological agents are currently not available for Common Groundsel in Washington State.

## Herbicide Control: Foliar Broadcast Treatment

<b>Glyphosate</b> (Rodeo, Killzall, Kleenup, Roundup)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply to actively growing plants before flowering. <b>Remarks:</b> Spray complete uniform coverage, but not to the point of runoff; dust on plants may reduce effectiveness; Glyphosate is nonselective and may injure or kill any vegetation it contacts; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
<b>2,4-D</b> (Many Trade Names)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply to actively growing plants before flowering. <b>Remarks:</b> Annual treatments needed to control seedlings; avoid drift to sensitive crops; surfactant recommended; do not apply near water.

\* Cowlitz County Noxious Weed Control Board does not endorse any product or brand name. Brand names are listed as an example only. Other commercial products may contain the listed active chemical for herbicide control. Always read and follow the safety protocols and rate recommendations on the herbicide label. **The Label is The Law.**

This control sheet includes excerpts from the Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB), [nwcb.wa.gov](http://nwcb.wa.gov). Herbicide information from the PNW Weed Management Handbook (ISBN 978-1-931979-22-1), WSU Hortsense (<http://hortsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/>) and product labels.