

Houndstongue

Cynoglossum Officinale

Borage Family

Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Identification Tips

- Biennial plant that grows 1 to 4 feet tall
- The entire plant is covered with short hairs and is rough in texture
- First year plant forms a rosette of long, tongue-shaped leaves; second year, plants grow upright
- Green leaves have a disagreeable odor
- Flowers are dull reddish-purple, drooping slightly along long, coiled stems
- Each flower produces bur-like seed pods about 1/3 inch long that cling to animal fur, clothing, machinery

Biology

- Forms thick, woody taproot
- Spreads by seed and is self pollinating
- Flowers May to July
- One plant can produce up to 600 seed pods and up to 2,000 individual seeds
- Seeds remain viable for 2 to 3 years

Impacts

- Contains poisonous alkaloids which can cause liver damage or even death in animals that eat it
- Remains toxic even when dry and can infest hay
- Produces prolific amounts of irritating bur-like seeds that can become embedded in animal fur, eyelids, even eyes
- Can cause dermatitis in humans

Distribution

- Has limited distribution in King County
- Found along roadsides, pastures, abandoned fields and thrives in forest openings cleared by construction
- Shade tolerant and does well in wetter grasslands

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **206-477-WEED**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds



Richard Old



This weed starts as a rosette (left); the following year it becomes upright and flowers (pictured above)



Missoula County Weed District

Houndstongue produces irritating bur-like seeds that can be difficult to remove especially in animal fur.

What You Can Do

This weed is uncommon west of the Cascades, but it is considered a noxious weed in many western states due to its abundance and impacts. Since distribution of houndstongue is limited in King County, eradication is possible. The key is preventing its spread and removing plants from all known sites. Help by familiarizing yourself with this weed and the habitat where it grows. Monitor sites regularly and whenever possible, remove plants prior to seed set. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Program if you see houndstongue on public lands, neighboring properties, or on your property so we can help prevent further spread of this weed.

Control Methods

Most control methods need to be applied over a number of years to be successful. Choose one or a combination of these. Preventing seed introduction is extremely important. Clean all equipment used in infested fields and take precautions to prevent movement of seeds by livestock, pets, vehicles.

Manual: Destroy plants before they bloom by digging out or pulling up. Small populations and young plants are easy to control by hand pulling, before flower production. Remove as much root as possible.



Mowing this weed before it flowers can significantly reduce seed spread. Use a mower or weed-eater, cutting the growth as close to the ground as possible.

improve results. Metsulfuron (Escort) at 1-2 ounces per acre is effective on houndstongue any time the plant is actively growing (but apply only to pasture, rangeland and non-crop sites). First year rosettes can be controlled with 2,4-D at 2 pints per acre in spring, but second year plants are not controlled well with 2,4-D. For more information or a site-specific recommendation in King County, Washington, contact the Noxious Weed Program. For information in other locations, contact your local weed board or extension office or refer to the recommendations in the *Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook*. Whenever using an herbicide, carefully follow all directions given on the label and follow any local or state requirements for herbicide use at that location.



Because the bur-like seeds can cling to about anything, it is important to thoroughly clean all equipment, shoes, clothing, pet fur when leaving an area known to be infested with houndstongue.

Mechanical: Cutting second year plants with conventional mowers or weed-eaters will reduce seed production and spread. Mow flowering stems as close to the ground as possible.

Cultural: Removal of rosettes in the autumn or early spring provides effective control. Reseed areas with fast growing grasses or groundcover as soon as possible; do not overgraze.

Chemical: Follow labels exactly as written and only use herbicides appropriate and legal for the site. For larger infestations, chemical control may be more cost-effective than manual removal. Adding a surfactant will