

Rush Skeletonweed

Chondrilla juncea

The Asotin County Weed Board began an active rush skeletonweed program in 2002. At that time, the goal was to treat every plant in the county. In 2014, our goal has been modified. We help landowners treat as many sites as possible in order to keep populations small enough so that it will not irreversibly impact range and crop lands. In Asotin County we have small infestations of rush skeletonweed in wheat crops, CRP, pastures and rangelands.

The most important things that a landowner can do are:

- learning to recognize it,
- always carrying appropriate herbicides for the occasional plant that you will find
- never mechanically disturbing the roots in your crops or CRP

Rush skeletonweed has devastated wheat production in Australia. No till farming will help armor crop lands from this weed. Whether no till is a 100% armor or just a means for prolonging the inevitable is an interesting debate among weed scientists.

Your best bet in Asotin County is to kill all rush skeletonweed plants. Especially be vigilant with plants that are bordering your fields. Rush skeletonweed is easy to spot at this time of year since its skeleton-like green stems poke above the surrounding brown grasses.

It is a perennial plant with a taproot often reaching eight feet. The mature plant consists of spindly, branched stems with very few, very small leaves. It can reach 1 - 4 feet in height. Distinctive, downward pointing, coarse reddish hairs are found near the stem base. The rest of the stem is fairly smooth. All plant parts have a milky sap when cut or broken. Bright yellow flower heads have 7 to 15 star shaped petals with distinct teeth at the ends. Flower heads are less than 1 inch in diameter and are scattered on the branches singly or in small clusters. Wind, water, and vehicles are the main dispersers of the seeds.

Once established, rush skeleton is very difficult to control. Taproot cuttings as small as ½ inch can produce new plants. An individual plant can produce up to 20,000 seeds that can germinate within 24 hours under optimal conditions. The seeds are dispersed on a parachute like pappus that make new infestation sites difficult to predict.

Please call the Weed Office for questions on herbicides, timing and cost share (509) 243-2098.

(photos on next page)

