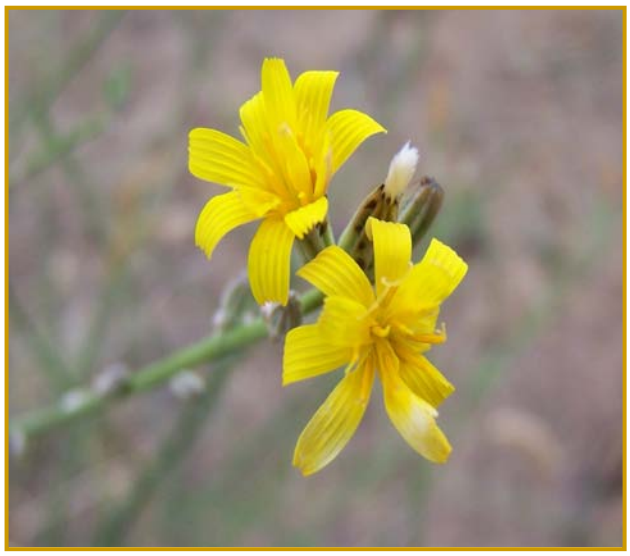
RUSH SKELETONWEED

Chondrilla juncea



- Other names: Gum succor, devil's-grass, naked weed, and hogbite

- Rush Skeletonweed is a Class B Designate noxious weed.

- A long lived herbaceous perennial from the Asteraceae Family, Rush Skeletonweed reproduces by seeds and vegetative growth.

- Rush Skeletonweed starts as a rosette in the fall, with leaves that resemble a dandelion. During summer it grows from 1 to 4 feet tall. Its slender, vertical root system reaches down 8 feet or more. A distinguishing characteristic of Rush Skeletonweed is the presence of coarse, downward pointing hairs near the base of the stem. It has very few leaves on its stem and they are narrow and linear in shape. The rosette leaves die off during flowering, leaving a skeleton-like appearance to the plant. The flowers are bright yellow, about ¾ inch in diameter and grow in the leaf axils, or on the branch tips. They may be single, or in clusters of 2 to 5. The ridged petals of the ray flowers have small teeth across their blunt ends.

- A mature plant can produce 1,500 flower heads, with up to 20,000 seeds, 90% of which will germinate. Each seed has a pappus which is capable of carrying seeds up to 20 miles away.

- It is found in pastures, rangeland, crop-fields, roadsides and open areas. This species is a threat to irrigated lands, wheat areas, rangelands. Infestations impact the cattle industry because it displaces native or beneficial forage species grazed by livestock and wildlife.

- The plants extensive root system makes it highly competitive to crop plants for moisture and nutrients, especially nitrogen. Consequently, it reduces crop yields, often by as much as 70 percent.

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CONTROL OPTIONS

- The most effective control of Rush Skeletonweed is prevention. Above all, prevent plants from going to seed. Clip and carefully bag flower heads or buds to help prevent seeds from being produced.
  - Hand pulling or digging is not an effective means of control for this species because of its extensive root system and its ability to produce new shoots from root fragments.
- Three biological control organisms, Rust Fungus, Gall Midge, and Gall Mite, have been released across Washington State where there are large populations of this plant, though not currently in Pierce County.
- Selective, translocated herbicides such as *Picloram* (used in Grazon) and *2, 4 D* (used in Crossbow) are two herbicides that can be effective on Skeletonweed.
- Spot spraying with an herbicide containing the active ingredient *glyphosate* (used in Roundup Pro, or Glyphos) can also be effective. *Glyphosate* is non-selective however, and will injure any plants that it comes in contact with. Spot applications should be applied at bud stage, prior to blooming.
- When using herbicides, carefully read and follow all label instructions and obey all label precautions. (Note: pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.)

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