

Why is it a Noxious Weed?

Tansy ragwort is toxic and can be lethal to cattle and horses, and to a lesser extent goats, and seldom sheep. All parts of tansy ragwort are toxic, both in live plants and in dried material in hay.

Tansy ragwort can also cause human liver damage, and should never be used as an herbal remedy or tea. It can also taint milk consumed by people, although it's unlikely to do so in toxic amounts. Also, honey containing nectar from tansy ragwort tastes so unpleasant it can't be sold.



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Eric Coombs, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

Noxious Weeds in Washington

"Noxious weed" means a plant that when established is highly destructive, competitive, or difficult to control by cultural or chemical practices. RCW 17.10.10

Noxious weeds reduce crop yields, destroy native plant and animal habitat, damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways, lower land values, and poison or harm people and livestock.

Tansy ragwort is a Class B noxious weed in Washington State. While control of this toxic plant is mandatory in many Washington counties, we strongly encourage all landowners to control tansy ragwort. Check with your local county noxious weed control board or extension office to learn more about this and other toxic plants.

Contact Us

If you have questions about tansy ragwort or other noxious weeds, we can help. Please contact us at:

WA State Noxious Weed Control Board

P.O. Box 42560

Olympia, WA 98504

360-725-5764

Email: noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov

<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov>

Or contact your local county noxious weed control board:

For information on biological control of tansy ragwort, contact:

Integrated Weed Control Project,

WSU Extension

2606 W Pioneer Ave

Puyallup WA 98371

253-445-4657

<http://invasives.wsu.edu>



Cover image: Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Tansy Ragwort

Senecio jacobaea

A Toxic, Noxious Weed in Washington

Identification

Tansy ragwort is a tap-rooted, biennial or perennial plant that is native to Eurasia. Young tansy ragwort plants form a rosette of coarse, ruffled leaves with reddish stems. Plants will grow one or more upright, leafy stems, 1 to 4 feet tall, the following year.

- Leaves are twice divided, deeply lobed and alternately arranged on the stems.
- Flowerheads are in flat-topped clusters. Each flowerhead is daisy-like in appearance and is a cluster of many small yellow flowers. There are generally 13 petals (ray flowers).
- At the base of the flowerheads there are generally 13 green bracts with dark tips.



Blooming tansy ragwort with its characteristically leafy stems.

Laurel Baldwin, WCNWCB



The young rosettes of tansy ragwort plants can be especially dangerous to grazing animals because they are hard to avoid as animals eat surrounding grass.

Control

Tansy ragwort control is best done before the plant begins to flower to prevent possible seed development. Plants have viable seed as soon as they begin to flower. Small infestations can be controlled manually by pulling up the entire plant, including roots. If you pull flowering plants, seal them in a plastic bag and put them in the trash—not in your compost or yard waste. Large infestations are better handled by a combination of manual and chemical controls. **After tansy ragwort control, plant areas with site appropriate plants to provide competition and reduce further tansy ragwort invasion. Monitor areas for seedlings and resprouts.**

Mechanical: Mowing is not effective as tansy ragwort can resprout if the roots are not removed. Mowed plants will send up multiple stems and flower at shorter heights. Mowing can be used as an interim measure to keep it from blooming and going to seed but other control methods will be needed the same year before flowers form. Mowed or injured plants can behave as perennials, growing new stems the following year. Dig up or pull the entire plant when the soil is moist to remove the whole root—root fragments left in the soil can resprout.



Hand-pulled tansy ragwort rosette.

Where does it grow?

Tansy ragwort often grows where land has been disturbed, and where grass and other plants are sparse. It typically occurs on roadsides, in pastures, fields and cleared forested areas. It is not particular to soil type.

It can be found growing throughout Washington but is more commonly found on the west side of the state.

Chemical: Herbicides are effective against tansy ragwort when applied to rosettes in the spring, or applied to the new growth initiated after fall rains. Selective herbicides can be used that target broadleaf weeds and not grasses. Remove and bag plants that have already flowered as herbicide applied at that time will not stop seed production. Animals should be removed from areas that have been sprayed for two weeks. Always read the label instructions before applying any herbicides for proper rate and timing. Check with your local county noxious weed board and the Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook <http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/> for specific herbicide recommendations.

Biological: The ragwort flea beetle (*Longitarsus jacobaeae*) and the ragwort seed fly (*Botanophila seneciella*) are biological agents used to control populations of tansy ragwort. Cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) caterpillars can defoliate tansy ragwort but can also feed on native and horticultural species of *Senecio* and *Packera*, so further redistribution of this moth is discouraged in many areas. Other control treatments should not be applied where insect agents are active. Contact the WSU Integrated Weed Control Project or your local county noxious weed board for further information.



Adult ragwort seed fly on tansy ragwort.

Eric Coombs, ODA, Bugwood.org

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