

THE WHAT'S THIS WEED? GUIDE
COMMON OBNOXIOUS PLANTS OF SPOKANE COUNTY



JUST BECAUSE IT'S A PEST, DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOXIOUS

SPOKANE COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD
WWW.SPOKANECOUNTY.ORG/WEEDBOARD · (509) 477-5777
222 N HAVANA ROOM 112, SPOKANE WA 99202 · @SPOKANENOXIOUSWEEDS

What is a 'weed'?

A weed is a plant growing in a place it is not wanted. Your idea of what's a weed and your neighbor's idea of what's a weed probably differs.

What is a "noxious" weed?

Noxious weeds are non-native plants introduced by human actions. They grow aggressively and, lacking their natural enemies, can be destructive*, highly competitive, or difficult to control. In Washington State, weed laws establish all property owners' responsibility for helping to prevent and control the spread of noxious weeds (RCW 17.10). Noxious weeds are designated by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board.

*Destructive weeds invade crops and rangelands, take over recreational lands, degrade wildlife habitat, damage infrastructure, increase fire hazards and change fire regimes.



Noxious and Toxic: Hoary Alyssum (L) and Poison Hemlock (R)

I thought noxious weeds = toxic plants ?

In Washington State "Noxious" is a legal designation, but in other literature you might see toxic plants called "noxious". Some listed noxious weeds *are* toxic and potentially fatal to livestock and humans. Examples include hoary alyssum and poison hemlock. But not all toxic plants spread aggressively, are difficult to control, or are destructive. Some prized garden plants, such as delphinium and lilies, can be toxic to humans or pets.



Native and Toxic: Larkspur (L) and Lupine (R)

Why aren't these annoying plants listed as noxious weeds?

Some plants that are considered weedy are actually native plants, and it makes sense that they're great at growing in our region. Other weedy plants do not compete aggressively, are not as destructive, or are not as difficult to control, disqualifying them from noxious weed designation.

If you believe that a plant should be added to Washington State's noxious weed list, visit the Washington State Weed Board's website to learn about the listing process: <https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/get-involved>.

What can I do about these annoying plants?

First, positively identify the plant in question. Identification is key to determining the best method for control or eradication. Then, cut, pull, till, or treat with appropriate herbicide just as you would with any other unwanted vegetation. Use the best tools available for your long-term land-use objectives.



Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

PROSTRATE SPURGE

Euphorbia maculata

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Forms a spreading mat with branches radiating from a central stem.
- Small semi-hairy leaves, typically with a distinct spot. Flowers small and inconspicuous.
- Milky sap is a skin irritant, similar to other spurge species.
- Also called: spotted spurge or spotted sandmat.
- Commonly found in gardens, lawns, roadsides and disturbed areas.
- Native to North America.



Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

PROSTRATE KNOTWEED

Polygonum aviculare

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Germinates early in the spring and forms a spreading mat. Stems slender and swollen at nodes. Leaves are lance-shaped.
- Flowers very small and white to pink.
- May be confused with prostrate spurge or purslane.
- Also called common knotgrass.
- Commonly grows in pavement cracks, disturbed soils, landscaped areas and gardens.
- Native to Eurasia.



HORSEWEED

Erigeron canadensis

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Grows to five feet tall with somewhat hairy stems, narrow leaves and many non-showy flowers.
- Has spread to Europe and Asia.
- Also called Marestail, Canadian fleabane, Canadian horseweed and butterweed.
- Commonly grows in fields, along roadsides, meadows, vacant lots and gardens.
- Native to North America.



Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

LAMBSQUARTERS

Chenopodium spp.

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Upright branching plant growing several feet tall with somewhat bushy appearance. Flowers inconspicuous.
- Historically was cultivated for food.
- Also called pitseed goosefoot.
- Commonly found in fields, along roadsides and in disturbed areas.
- A few *Chenopodium* species grow locally. They may be native to North America or introduced from Europe.



Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

PIGWEEDS

Amaranthus spp.

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Upright branching plant growing several feet tall and somewhat bushy. Stems typically hairy, may be red.
- Flowers small and grow in dense green clusters; flower bracts have spine-like tip.
- Also called red-root amaranth, common amaranth, pigweed amaranth, rough pigweed.
- Commonly found in waste areas, fields, roadsides and gardens.
- Native to tropical area of Americas.



John D. Byrd, Mississippi State University,
Bugwood.org

PLANTAINS

Plantago spp.

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Narrow leaves form a rosette and may spread or be semi-upright. Stems leafless ending in densely packed flowerhead.
- Has been used in traditional medicine.
- Numerous common names used for native and introduced species.
- Commonly found in lawns, gardens, roadsides, cultivated fields, waste areas.
- Native and introduced species grow locally.



MAYWEED CHAMOMILE

Anthemis cotula

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Spreading upright plant may be six inches to three feet tall. Foliage looks lacey and has unpleasant pungent smell.
- Flowers are small with the quintessential “daisy” look: white ray flowers (“petals”) and yellow disk flowers (center). Numerous flowers per plant.
- Also called stinking chamomile, mayweed or dogfennel.
- Commonly grows in open disturbed sites like roadsides, fields, gardens, landscaped areas and vacant lots.
- Native to Eurasia, Africa.



RABBITSFOOT CLOVER

Trifolium arvense

- Life Cycle: Annual to biennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Plants spreading and somewhat upright, growing from a few inches to just over a foot tall. Foliage is somewhat hairy and soft to the touch.
- Flowerheads have a pink blush and are very fuzzy.
- Also called hare’s foot clover.
- Commonly grows in disturbed fields and rangeland. Prefers sunny sites and sandy soils.
- Native to Europe and Asia.



COMMON MALLOW

Malva neglecta

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Spreading semi-upright plant with rounded, palmately veined leaves with coarsely toothed edges. Flowers small and white to pink.
- Plant, especially seeds, have been used for food.
- Also called buttonweed, cheeseplant and dwarf or roundleaf mallow.
- Commonly grows in yards, fallowed fields or other disturbed areas.
- Native to Eurasia and North Africa.



PRICKLY LETTUCE

Lactuca serriola

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Upright plant which can grow over five feet tall and exudes milky sap when damaged. Leaves are lobed and have spines on the mid-vein.
- Flowers are pale to bright yellow and produce plumed seeds that can be dispersed by the wind.
- Also called compass plant, wild lettuce and China lettuce.
- Commonly grows in landscaping, gardens, vacant lots, cropland, orchards and other disturbed sites.
- Native to Europe. Naturalized throughout much of North America.



SOWTHISTLES

Sonchus spp.

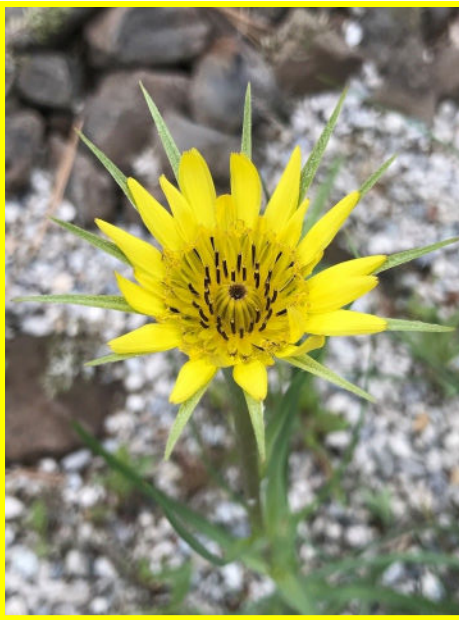
- Life Cycle: Annual to perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Stems, leaves and roots weep milky latex when damaged. Plants commonly grow one to two feet tall locally.
- Flowers bright yellow and dandelion-like. Seeds attached to a plume, aiding in wind dispersal.
- Perennial sowthistle is (*S. arvensis*) is a Class C listed noxious weed in Washington, but prickly and common sowthistle are more common.
- Commonly grows in gardens, landscaping, vacant lots and other disturbed areas.
- Native to Eurasia, but widely distributed.



TUMBLE MUSTARD

Sisymbrium altissimum

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Plants are upright and branching, growing up to five feet tall. Basal leaves are compound and stem leaves are divided into thin lobes.
- Flowers have four yellow petals and are numerous on the plant. When plants die they uproot or break away to become tumbleweeds.
- Also called Jim Hill mustard, tall mustard, and tall rocket.
- Commonly grows in fallowed cropland, vacant lots, rangeland and along roadsides.
- Native to Eurasia.



WESTERN SALSIFY

Tragopogon dubius

- Life Cycle: Annual to perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Leaves are linear and grass-like. Plant exudes milky sap when broken. Foliage is smooth and blue-green. Plants can grow over three feet tall.
- Flowers are bright yellow with flower bracts extending past the petals. Plants may produce one to several flower heads.
- Also called goatsbeard, yellow salsify and oyster plant.
- Commonly grows in disturbed open areas and is widely adaptable. Widely distributed throughout the US and Canada.
- Native to Europe and Asia. Other species of introduced and native salsifies also can be found in our region.



BLACK MEDIC

Medicago lupulina

- Life Cycle: Annual. Spreads by seed.
- Leaves divided into three leaflets like many clover species. Plants spread close to the ground.
- Flowers are small, bright yellow and grow on end of stalks. Fruit is coiled in a spiral and black when mature.
- Also called hop clover, black medic clover, hop trefoil and nonesuch.
- Commonly grows as a lawn weed and in waste areas. Prefers well-drained soils and is widely adaptable in open areas.
- Native to Eurasia and Northern Africa.



SWEET CLOVER, YELLOW AND WHITE

Melilotus officinalis and *Melilotus albus*

- Life Cycle: Annual to perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Plants upright and branching, and can grow over four feet tall. Leaves split into three narrow leaflets
- Flowers abundant and small, either bright yellow (*M. officinalis*) or white (*M. albus*). Flower heads can contain over thirty flowers, and plants produce numerous flower heads.
- Has been introduced for use as forage and a nitrogen fixing crop, but **can be toxic if the plant material molds.**
- Commonly grows in grasslands, in pastures, along roadsides, forest edges and other disturbed areas.
- Native to Eurasia. Many common names exist for both species.



CURLYCUP GUMWEED

Grindelia squarrosa

- Life Cycle: Biennial to short-live perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Unpalatable as forage for livestock but has been and continues to be used in traditional medicines.
- Bright yellow flowers surrounded by curved bracts that secrete a sticky substance. Forms upright to bushy plants, growing about three feet tall locally.
- Also called: serrate resinweed, curly-top gumweed
- Commonly grows in disturbed areas along trails, roadsides, in rangeland and waste areas.
- Native to our region.



BUR BUTTERCUP

Ceratocephala testiculata

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Low growing early season weed that is one of the first to bloom in sagebrush habitats after snow melts.
- Plants typically one to four inches tall with small yellow flowers and hairy leaves.
- Also called curvseed butterwort or hornseed buttercup.
- Commonly grows in rangeland, gardens, gravel drives and lots and other disturbed areas.
- Native to Europe.

Bonnie Million, Bureau of Land Management,
Bugwood.org



PURSLANE

Portulaca oleracea

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Prostrate, spreading, fleshy plant that branches radially from the root and forms a vegetative mat. Small bright yellow flowers.
- Edible but more commonly seen as a pest in gardens and crop land.
- Also called duckweed, little hogweed and common purslane.
- Commonly grows in pavement cracks, graveled areas, waste areas, landscaping and other disturbed sites.
- Native to Europe.

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Caleb Slemmons, National Ecological Observatory Network, Bugwood.org

HAWKSBEARD

Crepis spp.

- Life Cycle: Annual to perennial, reproduces by seed
- Numerous introduced and native species in the *Crepis* genus exist in Washington.
- Typically bears yellow dandelion-like flowers on branching stalks.
- Typically has basal rosette composed of lanceolate toothed leaves and few, narrow stem leaves.
- Depending on species, may occur in roadside ditches, disturbed fields, forest edges, or other disturbed areas.
- Native and introduced species occur in our region.



COMMON NIPPLEWORT

Lapsana communis

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Herbaceous plant can grow over three feet tall with upright, hairy, branching stems. Produces milky white sap when damaged. Leaves larger lower on the plant, oval and toothed. Leaves may be confused with garlic mustard plants before bolting. Can grow over 3 feet tall.
- Small yellow flowers look similar to prickly lettuce and wither quickly. Produces numerous small seeds.
- Also called *Lapsana* to avoid the slightly uncomfortable name.
- Commonly grows in forest edges, fields, waste areas, gardens and along roadsides.
- Native to Eurasia.



FIDDLENECKS

Amsinckia spp.

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Hay containing fiddlenecks **may be toxic to livestock**; foliage and seeds contain alkaloids and nitrates.
- Leaves, stems and flower bracts covered in bristles, flower stem unfurls as plant blooms. Grows to about two feet tall.
- There are several native species, which can hybridize, and identification to species level can be challenging.
- Commonly grows in rangeland, cropland, disturbed areas.
- Native to the western North and South America, naturalized elsewhere.



HAIRY VETCH

Vicia villosa

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Spreading plant attaches itself to other plants and structures by tendrils. Leaves and stems very hairy, creating velvety texture. Leaves pinnate with ten to twenty leaflets.
- Flowers purple and numerous on flowerheads. Flowers bloom progressively up the flower head and form small pods.
- Also called fodder vetch, winter vetch and woolly vetch.
- Commonly grows in meadows, grasslands, along roadsides and in other disturbed areas. Also grown as forage and cover crops
- Native to Eurasia and North Africa.



MONEY PLANT

Lunaria annua

- Life Cycle: Annual to biennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Herbaceous plant that can grow three feet tall and tolerates shade. Leaves are oval with toothed edges, and may be mistaken for garlic mustard before blooming.
- Purple or white flowers have four petals and develop distinct flat oval seed pods that look like coins.
- Also called honesty or annual honesty plant.
- Commonly grows in forest edges, gardens, shaded disturbed areas and along roadsides.
- Native to Eurasia.



CREeping BELLFLOWER

Campanula rapunculoides

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed and creeping rhizomes.
- Basal leaves are triangular with toothed edges, stem leaves are narrow and stalkless. Stems and leaves typically are hairy. Can grow nearly three feet tall.
- Flowers purple, bell-shaped and nodding, blooms progressively up the flower stalk.
- Also called rampion bellflower.
- Commonly grows in meadows, forest edges and fields. Prefers some shade. An ornamental that escaped cultivation.
- Native to Europe and western Siberia.

Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut,
Bugwood.org

DAME'S ROCKET

Hesperis matronalis

- Life Cycle: Biennial to weak perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Leaves lanceolate with toothed edges. Lower leaves have stems, upper leaves typically don't have stems. Can grow over four feet tall.
- Flowers have four petals and may be white, pink, or purple. Multiple flowers bloom along elongating stems
- Also called mother-of-the-evening, dame's violet, sweet rocket, dame's gillyflower and more.
- Commonly grows along roadsides, in forest edges, vacant lots, and other disturbed areas where it escapes cultivation.
- Native to Europe.



Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia,
Bugwood.org

EVERLASTING PEAVINE

Lathyrus latifolius

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed and spreading rhizomes.
- Vining plant can climb brush and small trees with clasping tendrils. Leaves have two leaflets and stems are winged.
- Flowers typically pink but may be red, white or striped. Flower shape typically of pea family with banner, keel and wings. Multiple flower bloom on each raceme. **Can be toxic to livestock.**
- Also called perennial pea, perennial peavine or perennial sweetpea.
- Commonly grows in roadside ditches, forest edges, gardens or other disturbed areas that are somewhat moist.
- Native to Europe.



ALFALFA

Medicago sativa

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Mostly upright plant with leaves split into three leaflets. Flowers small and bloom in dense clusters. Flowers are typically purple, but may be white, yellow, or pink. Can grow over three feet tall.
- Widely cultivated as a nutrient dense fodder for livestock, as groundcover and green manure. Plants escape cultivation and grow wild in right of way areas locally.
- Also called lucerne.
- Commonly grows along roadsides, open fields and other disturbed open areas.
- Native to Eurasia with a very long history of cultivation.



COMMON BURDOCK

Arctium minus

- Life Cycle: Biennial to perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Begins as a rosette, bolting in second year into upright plant that can grow over five feet tall. Leaves may have wavy edges.
- Bracts on flower heads are like Velcro, and attach to animals when dry, spreading seed.
- Also called lesser burdock, little burdock and wild rhubarb.
- Commonly grows along roadsides, trails, fields, forest edges and other disturbed areas.
- Native to Europe. Another introduced burdock, *A. lappa*, also grows in our region.



REDSTEM FILAREE

Erodium cicutarium

- Life Cycle: Annual to biennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Spreading or upright plants with hairy red stems. Leaves are divided and have toothed or lobed edges.
- Has pink-purple flowers with five petals. Seeds have long tails that split apart as the mature seed head dries.
- Also called redstem stork's-bill, common stork's-bill and pinweed.
- Commonly grows in pastures, landscaped areas, along roadsides, and other disturbed areas. Prefers sandy soils.
- Native to Eurasia and Northern Africa.



CHICORY

Cichorium intybus

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Deep taproot. Upright branching stems have very small leaves. Produces milky sap when leaves or stems are injured.
- Basal leaves have been used as salad greens and the root has been used as a coffee substitute.
- Also called: blue daisy, blue dandelion, succory and coffeeweed.
- Commonly grows in disturbed areas along roads or railroads, trails and in waste areas.
- Native to Mediterranean region.



SCOURING RUSH

Equisetum hyemale

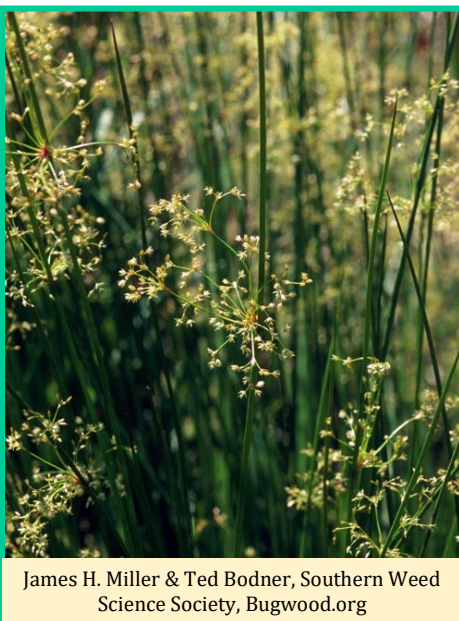
- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by spreading rhizomes and spores.
- Stems rough, hollow, jointed and pop apart when pulled. Forms dense colonies and prefers damp sites.
- Fertile stems develop a spore-producing cone at the end.
- Also called rough horsetail, snake plant and jointed grass.
- Commonly grows in damp areas like along streams and waterways and in wetlands, but can tolerate relatively dry soil.
- Native to North America and northern Eurasia.



YELLOW NUTSEGE

Cyperus esculentus

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed, creeping rhizomes and small underground nut-like tubers.
- Plants have narrow grass-like leaves growing from stem bases.
- Flower stems triangular, with leaf-like bracts below flower heads. Flowers are arranged in spikelets, appearing somewhat feathery while in bloom.
- Mnemonic device: Sedges have edges.
- Commonly grows in damp areas like streams, ditches, wetlands and riparian zones.
- Native to North America. Many other native and introduced *Cyperus* species grow in Washington State.



RUSHES

Juncus spp.

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed and rhizomes.
- Many upright, round stems make dense patches. Flowers in clusters near end of stem.
- Low forage value for livestock.
- Mnemonic device: Rush are round and hollow to the ground.
- Commonly grows in damp areas like wetlands, pond or lake edges and riparian zones.
- Native and introduced species grow in Spokane County.



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LARGE CRABGRASS

Digitaria sanguinalis

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Spreading, branching grass which can lay flat or grow upright, and can root from lower nodes.
- Flowers are inconspicuous on multiple spikes that grow at end of grass stems. Multiple flowering spikes radiate from stem like a stick-figure hand.
- Also called hairy crabgrass and hairy finger-grass.
- Common lawn, garden and cropland pest.
- Native to Eurasia.



Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

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QUACKGRASS

(Elymus repens)

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed and creeping rhizomes.
- Has long, tough, wiry rhizomes. Leaves are flat, broad and hairy, and may lay nearly flat or be upright.
- Flower spikes are stiff, upright and may be two to six inches long.
- Also called couch grass, creeping wild rye, common couch, quick grass, and dog grass.
- Commonly grows in disturbed open areas like lawns, gardens, grasslands and waste areas.
- Native to Eurasia and North Africa.



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WITCHGRASS

(Panicum capillare)

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Bunchgrass that can be spreading to upright; leaves and nodes noticeably hairy.
- Forms fan-like many-branched flowering structure that can break away and form a tumbleweed when mature.
- Also called ticklegrass.
- Commonly grows in cropland, field edges, degraded rangeland, gardens and other disturbed open areas.
- Native to North America.



BULBOUS BLUEGRASS

(*Poa bulbosa*)

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by bulbils, rarely by seed.
- Base of stems are bulbous; when separated from a clump, bulbous sections can create a new colony.
- Instead of producing true flowers, flower spikes typically produce small bulbils that are clones of the parent plant.
- Also called bulbous meadow-grass.
- Commonly grows in grassland, gardens, vacant lots and other disturbed areas.
- Native to Eurasia and North Africa.



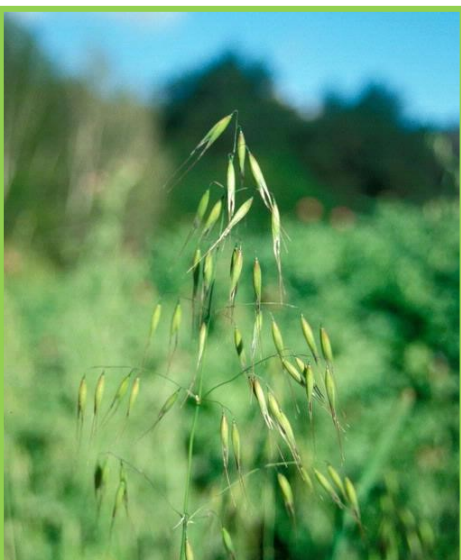
Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org

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PERENNIAL RYEGRASS

(*Lolium perenne*)

- Life Cycle: Perennial. Reproduces by seed.
- Grows in bunching form with dark green glossy leaves. Grows to two feet tall with numerous long stiff leaves near the plant base.
- Seeds develop on spikelets that alternate on the flowering stem.
- Also called English ryegrass.
- Commonly cultivated for forage and erosion control. May be seen under cultivation or in fields, on roadsides and other open sites where it has escaped cultivation.
- Native to Europe, Asia and North Africa.



John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org

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WILD OATS

(*Avena fatua*)

- Life Cycle: Annual. Reproduces by seed.
- Upright with hollow stems, growing up to four feet tall. Leaves have small hairs and are somewhat rough.
- Flowers are inconspicuous and grow on spikelets that branch from the main stem. Flowering structure droops away from the stem.
- Also called common wild oat.
- Commonly grows as a weed in grain fields, fields, roadsides and other open disturbed areas.
- Native to Eurasia.

IDENTIFICATION RESOURCES

ONLINE

- **Spokane County Noxious Weed Control Board** website for area-specific noxious weed ID and treatment information: <https://www.spokanecounty.org/weedboard>
- **Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board** website for all state listed noxious weeds and weeds on the monitor list: <https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/>
- **Weeds of the West**: PDF available online
- **USDA PLANTS Database**: <https://plants.usda.gov/>
- **Forb Seedling Identification Guide for the Inland Northwest**: PDF available online from NRCS
- **Burke Herbarium Image Collection**: biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php

BOOKS & APPS

- **Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest** by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson
- **Plants of the Inland Northwest and Southern Interior British Columbia** by Roberta Parish, Ray Coupé, and Dennis Lloyd
- **Flora of the Pacific Northwest** by C. Leo Hitchcock and Arthur Cronquist (*Dichotomous key*)
- **Field Guide to the Grasses of Oregon and Washington** by Cindy Talbott Roché, Richard E. Brainerd, Barbara L. Wilson, Nick Otting, and Robert C. Korfhage (*Dichotomous key*)
- **WA Invasive Species App** 
- **Wildflowers of Washington App** 
- **Grasses of Montana App** 

STILL NOT SURE?

Send clear photos of intact plant including **stem, leaves, roots, flowers, size** or other identifying characteristics to WeedBoard@SpokaneCounty.org. See example photos of garlic mustard below.

OR

Bring in a live sample with intact **leaves, roots and flowers** to Spokane County Noxious Weed Control Board's staff for ID help. Keep the plant sample in moist soil, water or damp paper towel to prevent wilting. Call ahead to ensure staff are available: (509) 477-5777

