



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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HORSEWEED

Conyza canadensis

THREAT: Horseweed, also known as marestail or fleabane, is a native of North America, although it has naturalized in many parts of the world. It is often found growing along right-of-ways, and in pastures, croplands, fallow fields and other disturbed areas. Horseweed grows in a wide range of soils, but prefers full sun. Horseweed spreads only by seed, and a single plant can produce 50,000 seeds. Seeds are dispersed by wind and water, as well as carried by machinery, soil, and in the fissures of bark on harvested trees. The pollen can cause allergies in some people. Contact with this plant can also cause skin irritation in some. The leaves and flowers contain a chemical that irritates the nostrils of horses. Livestock generally avoid eating horseweed, due to its bitter taste.

DESCRIPTION: Horseweed is a summer or winter annual (occasionally, a biennial) herb, which grows to up to 7 feet tall, but is usually shorter. The lower part of the stem is unbranched but it can become highly branched on the upper portion of the plant. The numerous green leaves are long and narrow (3-4" long; 1/2" wide) and grow along the main stem. The leaf margins are usually toothed, but may be smooth. Small, white hairs cover the leaves and stem. The tiny flower heads, yellow in the center, with white rays, are borne in clusters at the ends of the branched stems. Horseweed flowers from mid-summer into the fall.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Horseweed can be controlled using mechanical and chemical means. Hand digging can be used to control small infestations. Cultivation can be used for control, but may also expose more seed. Mowing when the plants are in bud stage can be used to prevent seed production. In some areas, horseweed is resistant to certain herbicides. For site-specific chemical recommendations, contact the weed control board.

