

# Field Mouse-ear Chickweed and Common Mouse-ear Chickweed

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FIELD MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED —  
*Cerastium arvense* — Showing entire plant  
with roots, individual stem with flowers, and  
seed. Seed enlarged 12 diameters.

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# Field Mouse-ear Chickweed and Common Mouse-ear Chickweed

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Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Both of these weeds are found chiefly in lawns, meadows, and pastures. Common mouse-ear chickweed is found in all parts of the state. Field mouse-ear chickweed is found mainly in the coast section and occasionally in the Willamette Valley. They are perennials. Their nature of growth and method of control are similar, so both will be discussed in this bulletin.

## FIELD MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED

(*Cerastium arvense*)

Field mouse-ear chickweed reproduces by seed, creeping stems, and from slender rootstocks. It is found in pastures in western Oregon and native in the mountains. It may grow erect from 3 to 6 inches high or close to the ground, often forming a dense mass. The leaves are lance-shaped, from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long, generally wider at the base than at the tip, and are borne clasping the stem in pairs opposite each other along the slender stems. Leaves are generally smooth, but occasionally are somewhat hairy with minute glands along the surface. Flowers are about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch across, a showy white with deeply notched petals. They are borne on the tips of small, frequently branched stems. Often the flowers are produced in groups of three, each flower on a separate, slender stem. The seed is brown and very small, about  $\frac{1}{30}$  of an inch long, and flat on the side. The back is curved and rough, due to irregular rows of cone-shaped tips.

## COMMON MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED

(*Cerastium vulgatum*)

Common mouse-ear chickweed is similar in many respects to field mouse-ear chickweed. It reproduces by seed and by rooting at the nodes of the stem. It generally grows in mats, instead of erect as field mouse-ear chickweed occasionally does. Flowers are borne in compact clusters on short stems. Stems and leaves are covered with many silky hairs. This is the most readily distinguishable characteristic separating the two weeds. Seed is about  $\frac{1}{50}$  of an inch long and similar to field mouse-ear chickweed, except that it is smaller and the cone-shaped tips on the surface are not so regular in shape and are more like short ridges than points.

**Oregon seed law.** Common mouse-ear chickweed is declared noxious by Oregon law if present in seeds of lawn grasses. In that case, the presence of the weed must be declared on the label, together with the approximate number of seeds per pound.

**Control.** The seeds of both weeds are commonly carried with small lawn grass seed. They can only be detected by the use of a magnifying lens. In

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buying lawn grass seed care should be exercised that none of the weed seeds are present.

If the weeds are in meadows or pastures, about the only satisfactory method is to plow the land and seed it to a row crop that can be cultivated, or give the land a period of summer fallow.

There are several methods of controlling the pest in lawns. It is reported that dusting the plants thoroughly with superphosphate will kill them. Sodium



COMMON MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED—*Cerastium vulgatum*—Showing entire plant with roots, individual stem with flowers, and seed. Seed enlarged 18 diameters.

chlorate mixed at the rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 ounces per gallon of water and sprayed on the weeds at the rate of 1 gallon per 100 square feet has given good control.

Iron sulphate mixed at the rate of 2 pounds to a gallon of water and sprayed on the weeds at the rate of 1 gallon per 400 square feet often gives satisfactory control. This chemical should be applied on a cloudy day, for if a hard rain should occur within a day or two after treating, results may not be good. Probably more than one application will have to be made to kill all the weeds. With this treatment, the lawn grass will be burned, but usually will soon recover. Much of the clover will be killed. After the lawn has been treated by any method, it should be fertilized to stimulate grass growth, which will also help choke out the weeds.

The Oregon Experiment Station has found a new commercial weed killer, called *Sinox*, to be good for the control of chickweed in lawns, grain, and grass plantings. This chemical is an organic dye compound that kills certain broad-leaved weeds and clover without killing the narrow-leaved grass and grain plants. It is diluted with water and sprayed on the infested area. For the control of chickweed in grain or grass fields 1 gallon of *Sinox* and 8 pounds of ammonium sulphate dissolved in 100 gallons of water and sprayed on when the grain is 2 to 3 inches high has given best results. This amount will treat 1 acre. In a few days most of the weeds will be dead but the grain will not be damaged. The Experiment Station has found that the addition of ammonium sulphate to the *Sinox* increases its effectiveness in two ways. The killing action of the *Sinox* is increased and, when used in sufficient quantities, the nitrogen in the ammonium sulphate stimulates the crop so that it grows faster and gives more competition to the weeds. Crop yields and quality are generally increased.

The rate of application is increased for the control of chickweed in lawns. The best rate is found to be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound of *Sinox* and 2 pounds of ammonium sulphate to the square rod. The *Sinox* should be dissolved in 1 gallon of water, the ammonium sulphate in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  gallons of water. Both should be dissolved completely. After dissolving the two chemicals separately, the ammonium sulphate solution should be poured into the *Sinox* solution, and the mixture should be stirred vigorously without delay. This quantity should be used for each square rod.

If some weeds recover after two or three weeks, another spraying should be given, using a more dilute solution of *Sinox* alone. A mixture of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 ounces of *Sinox* and 1 gallon of water sprayed on the weeds until all are wet is recommended. Oregon Experiment Station Circular of Information No. 240 explains the use of *Sinox* in detail. Other methods for controlling lawn weeds are explained in Extension Bulletin 510.

*This is one of a series of 39 bulletins discussing 58 perennial weeds in Oregon and their control. A list of bulletins in this series will be found on the last page of Extension Bulletin 510. The individual bulletins are punched so that several may be bound together if desired.*

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