Blue Flowering Lettuce

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Blue Flowering Lettuce—Lactuca puchella—Showing stem with leaves and flowers, single basal leaf, section of root, and seed. Seed magnified three diameters. Lateral rootstock not illustrated.

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Blue Flowering Lettuce

(_Lactuca puchella_)

Other common names: showy lettuce and large-flowered blue lettuce.

This weed is a deep-rooted perennial that reproduces by underground rootstocks and seed. It is found east of the Cascade Mountains and rarely in western Oregon or Washington. The plant grows from 2 to 4 feet tall, each plant with a single stalk that generally branches at the top. Upper leaves are lance-shaped, not notched, and connect directly to the main stem. The lower leaves, which vary in length from 2 to 8 inches, are dark bluish-green, larger than the upper leaves, have deeply cut or notched margins, and are connected to the main stem by short stalks. All leaves are smooth and covered with a light, powdery substance. The attractive pale blue to violet head of the flowers is about one inch across and is borne individually in a narrow panicle on stalks that vary from less than an inch to several inches in length. The tips of the strap-shaped petals are notched.

Seeds are about _¼_ inch long and have a short, thick beak, the tip of which expands into a short, cup-shaped disk. Seed is club-shaped and flattened, with thick ridges down the sides. The whole surface is dull and rough. Silky, white down is attached to its tip, which like thistledown is carried by the wind. The entire plant, including its fleshy rootstocks, contains a white, bitter, milky juice.

**CONTROL.** Cultivation is an effective way of eradicating blue flowering lettuce. One season of intensive cultivation (every 21 days) will usually eliminate the plants. Cultivation should be followed with a good competitive crop such as alfalfa, winter wheat, or grass pasture.

The herbicide 2,4-D is fairly effective in controlling blue flowering lettuce. One pound of 2,4-D acid equivalent per acre is effective in control in wheat and barley. It should be applied in the early bud stage of growth. Wetting agents should be used with the amine form of 2,4-D. Esters do not need wetting agents. Repeated application for two or three years is needed for eradication. Consult the label for grazing restrictions and other limitations in use. Check state regulations regarding use of 2,4-D esters in your area.

Prepared by Oregon State University Extension weed control specialists in consultation with Extension specialists at Washington State University and the University of Idaho.

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