

# 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 3 diameters. Lateral rootstock not illustrated.

Oregon State System of Higher Education  
Federal Cooperative Extension Service  
Oregon State College  
Corvallis

# Blue Flowering Lettuce

(*Lactuca pulchella*)

By LAWRENCE JENKINS and E. R. JACKMAN\*

Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Other common names: Showy lettuce, and Large flowered blue lettuce.

This weed is a deep-rooted perennial that reproduces by underground root-stocks and seed. It is rarely found west of the Cascade Mountains but is spreading in parts of eastern Oregon. The plant grows from 2 to 4 feet tall, each plant with a single stalk that generally branches at the top. There is a marked difference in the shape of the leaves in the upper and lower parts of the plant. Upper leaves are lance-shaped, not notched, and connect directly to the main stem. The lower leaves, which generally 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 smaller stems. All leaves are smooth and covered with a light, powdery substance. The attractive pale blue to violet flowers are about 1 inch across and are borne individually in a narrow panicle on stems that vary from less than an inch to several inches in length. The tips of the petals are notched.

Seeds are about  $\frac{3}{8}$  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 thistle-down is carried by the wind to infest neighboring farms. The entire plant, including its fleshy root-stock, contains a white, bitter, milky juice. The weed is not liked by animals and has no economic value.

**Oregon weed law.** This weed is classed by law as noxious, and if it is present in seed of forage crops, that fact must be stated on the label, together with the approximate number of seeds per pound.

**Control.** Only a limited amount of work has been done on the control of this weed in Oregon. It apparently will require more than one season of summer fallow to accomplish control. Blue flowering lettuce is quite resistant to sodium chlorate. Five pounds have been applied to the square rod without giving a satisfactory kill. Carbon bisulphide should be used on small patches. Two years of summer fallow will probably be required in most cases. Cultivation should be systematic and thorough about every 2 weeks during the growing season as long as the weed appears. Oregon Extension Bulletin 510 explains the use of carbon bisulphide and other methods of controlling weeds.

*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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