



Tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*) is one of the more serious weed problems in western Oregon and Washington. Tansy ragwort, as many other troublesome weeds, was introduced into the United States from Europe. The first reported observation of this weed was in 1922. Tansy ragwort is most commonly found on the Coast Range area and is one of the first plants to invade cutover forest lands. It is not usually found in annually tilled fields. However, it can invade irrigated pastures, perennial seed fields, and sometimes is found in the margins of alfalfa fields.

Tansy ragwort usually is a biennial plant. However, under some conditions, plants live over as perennials. Most seeds germinate the first fall, form a rosette the following year, and blossom the next season. Unless the plants are damaged, they normally die after blossoming. However, when plants are cut or broken during the second year, they can blossom the third year; thus, they are sometimes perennial.

Tansy ragwort is a very conspicuous plant when it blooms. The daisylike golden yellow flowers have a long blossoming period. The rosette plants have irregularly lobed leaves with a visible blade region near the tip. The leaves, 5 to 9 inches long and dark green in color, are attached directly to the main stalk.

The plant spreads principally by seed. Individual plants will have as many as 150,000 seeds. Most of these seeds fall within a few hundred feet of the parent plant. However, some can be carried greater distances by wind and water. The rough seed coats readily attach to hair and wool of livestock and wildlife and to feathers of birds.

### *Poisonous Properties*

Tansy ragwort is not a highly poisonous plant, but all portions of the plant are poisonous. It is reported to contain six different alkaloid poisons. Fortunately, tansy ragwort plants are not very palatable; therefore, they usually are not eaten by cattle and horses if more palatable plants are available. Sheep consume tansy ragwort plants readily, and they are less susceptible to poisoning by tansy ragwort than cattle and horses. In livestock, most cases of poisoning are caused by an accumulative build-up of poisonous alkaloids.

### *Control*

The most commonly used herbicide for the control of tansy ragwort is 2,4-D. Excellent control has been obtained by spraying in the rosette stage of growth (April or early May) with 3 pounds (3 quarts of the 4 pound per gallon formulation) of 2,4-D (low volatile ester, emulsifiable acid, or amine plus wetting agent). For small hand equipment, use 4 tablespoons of 2,4-D containing 3 to 4 pounds per gallon, for each gallon of water. Plants must be wet thoroughly for good control; plants die slowly after being sprayed. Controlling tansy ragwort with 2,4-D is not effective after the plants start to bloom. Observe grazing restrictions on the label.

One pound (1 quart) of dicamba (Banvel) in 50 gallons of water is effective in controlling tansy ragwort. Use wetting agents according to the dicamba label. The best control has been obtained when sprays are applied before tansy ragwort blossoms. Observe grazing restrictions on the label.

Soil sterilants, such as sodium chlorate and borate-chlorate mixtures, are effective in controlling tansy ragwort but are less practical to use because of cost. Sodium chlorate is a fire hazard, so it must be used cautiously.

### *Control by Grazing*

Sheep grazing has proven to be an effective way of controlling tansy ragwort. Fences are needed to confine the sheep to tansy ragwort infested areas; sheep should be grazed in these areas for several years. Most of the tansy ragwort is consumed in the seedling and rosette stages of growth, rather than in the flowering stage.

### *Other Control Methods*

Tansy ragwort is not a shade-tolerant plant. Reforestation is a good way of controlling tansy ragwort, but this requires many years. Biological control methods are being studied. Cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaea*) shows promise of controlling tansy ragwort. The cinnabar moth has been released in Oregon, and has shown evidence of some control. A research program is being continued at Oregon State University for more efficient use of this biological control agent.

At present, practical control is obtained by timely spraying, sheep grazing, reforestation, and tillage.



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