

# RAGWEED

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FEDERAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE      OREGON STATE COLLEGE      CORVALLIS

Cooperative Extension work in Agriculture and Home Economics, F. E. Price, director.  
Oregon State College and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.  
Printed and distributed in furtherance of Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914

Extension Bulletin 738

July 1953

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## Why Control?

Ragweed is almost an unknown weed to people in Oregon. Both common ragweed, *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, and giant ragweed, *Ambrosia trifida* differ from most common weeds in that they are of minor importance in reducing crop yields. They are of major importance, however, as a health nuisance to humans who are subject to hay fever. Ragweed causes more hay fever in the United States than any other plant.

Neither common ragweed nor giant ragweed is common in Oregon. Until recently Oregon has been declared free of these pests. Common ragweed plants are now found in some areas in Willamette Valley counties, in southern Oregon, and in the northern section of Umatilla County. Probably ragweed is more widespread in Oregon than has been recognized.

The Oregon Legislature in the 1953 session passed legislation declaring both common and giant ragweed noxious plants. Under this act, the property holders are required to eradicate ragweed on their property. If the property holders do not eradicate the plant, the State Department of Agriculture will arrange for eradication and the cost of eradication will be charged to the property owner.

## Plant Description

### Common ragweed

Common ragweed is a late-emerging annual plant. Plants vary in height from one to four-and-one-half feet. The stems are rough, hairy, erect, and branched. The leaves usually are nearly smooth, deeply cut into several toothed portions, and appear mostly alternate on the stem. The flower heads are of two kinds: pollen-producing and seed-producing. The pollen-producing are small, often inverted, and borne in slender clusters at the tips of the branches. Seed-producing heads are few and inconspicuous when young, borne with small leaves at the base of the leaves and in the forks of the upper branches. The seed cases are top shaped, light brown, long-pointed, bearing several longitudinal ridges which end in short, spiny projections near the top. The seed cases are about 1/16-inch long.

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## **Giant ragweed**

Giant ragweed is a large, coarse, annual plant, varying from three to 18 feet tall. The plants differ from common ragweed in height and coarseness of plant and leaf shape. The leaves have three to five lobes, all in pairs at the joints of the stem. The seed cases are larger than common ragweed and bear several thick, short projections near the top.

## **Land Adaptation**

Ragweed has a wide range of land adaptation. The plant will grow in waste areas or cropland. Because of the late growth, ragweed plants will establish themselves in spring-seeded grains. The plants will grow in strawberry fields, corn fields, grain fields, gardens, and pastures.

## **Control with 2,4-D**

Fortunately, both common and giant ragweed are easily killed with 2,4-D sprays. The most difficult problem in controlling them with 2,4-D is the timing of the spray applications. The ragweed plants emerge about May 1. The weeds are readily killed with 2,4-D from the time of emergence until blossom or pollen-shedding time. In waste land or pasture lands the weeds should be sprayed in June at a time when they are making good growth and before pollen is formed. In grain fields the spraying should be done before the grain develops heads. Sprays applied during the heading period will injure the developing grain crop. 2,4-D should be used at the rate of  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 pound of parent acid per acre. (6 teaspoons of 1-pound material or 1.5 teaspoons of 3- to 4-pound material per gallon of water.) For spot spraying, 80 to 100 gallons of water per acre should be used. For spraying with a boom on crop land, good control can be obtained with as little as 10 to 15 gallons of total spray per acre.

On crop land, often the spraying can be delayed until after the crop has been harvested. Under such circumstances, the spray should be applied during early August, before the early plants shed pollen.

## **Control by Cultivation and Clipping**

In crop land, one of the more positive methods of control is to plow or disc the infested fields immediately after harvest. This destroys the plants before they shed pollen, but does permit the harvesting of the crop.

In pasture fields and on waste land where mowing is practical, the weeds can be controlled by periodic mowing, cutting the ragweed low, thus preventing the development of pollen and seed.

Eradication may take years. In areas where ragweed has become established, and matured seed in previous years, it may take two or more years to completely eradicate all plants. The seeds have the ability of living in the soil without germinating for more than one season.