

War on Weeds – Weeds are Everybody’s Problem

THE ISSUE: Western salsify

Western salsify (*Tragopogon dubius*) is a perennial that typically dies after reproducing. It is native to Eurasia and northern Africa. It was introduced into the U.S. as a food source and as an ornamental. Western salsify can form dense stands, crowd out native vegetation and decrease the productivity of the area.



Photo courtesy of Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

To the untrained eye, western salsify can appear to be a grass when it is young. As it matures it becomes evident that it is not a grass. Leaves and stems that are cut or broken will exude a white latex substance that turns brown with time. Leaves are long and slender with a rubbery feel. Stems typically grow 12-40 inches tall. Each stem will produce a single yellow flower head that looks like a large dandelion head. Each flower head is composed of 20-120 small flowers. Flowers mature into dandelion-like seed heads. Each seed has an umbrella-like structure that can catch the wind and allow the seed to be transported great distances. Western salsify only reproduces by seed, ensuring that it doesn’t go to seed is the first step to long-term control.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Options:

- Prevention – Learn to identify this plant. Never transport unknown plant material. Make sure to clean equipment and clothing when leaving infested areas.
- Mechanical – Hand pulling or digging can be an effective form of control if done prior to seed head maturation. Mowing can also be effective if done when flowers first appear, repeated mowing may be necessary.
- Cultural – Plant beneficial vegetation that can compete with western salsify. Use management practices that will benefit desirable vegetation.
- Chemical – Glyphosate can effectively control western salsify, but it is a non-selective herbicide, meaning it will also kill other desirable vegetation. A good option for western salsify found in grassy areas is 2,4-D + Dicamba. **Always read and follow herbicide label directions!**

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