

Orange Hawkweed

Hieracium aurantiacum



Description:

A perennial forb that reproduces by seed or stolons (short, strawberry-like runners). The plant forms a rosette the first year and a flowering bolt the following season. It is best adapted to well-drained, coarse-textured soils. It has a fibrous root system with a woody stem base.

Stems are erect, usually solitary, leafless and covered with bristly hairs. They grow 15 to 90 cm tall and contain a milky sap.

Leaves are mostly basal, narrow, elongated, covered with bristly hairs and are 10 to 15 cm long.



Flowers are orange-red and crowded into a round-topped cluster. This is the only hawkweed, native or introduced, to have orange flowers. Mature flowers turn into dandelion-like globes of tufted seed.

Control

The ancient Greeks believed the sap of hawkweeds is what gave hawks their keen eyesight. There are many native hawkweeds in North America, but they reproduce by seed only. Introduced hawkweeds arrived from Europe as ornamentals. Hawkweeds interbreed freely, but native species lack stolons.

While infestations usually originate from seed, their very rapid expansion is the result of the stolons producing new plants. Untreated infestations form dense mats of rosettes that exclude nearly all other vegetation.

Hand-pulling or digging before seed production can have an impact on infestations, but it is important to remove as much root as possible. Mowing is not an option for controlling hawkweed – pieces of stolon take root and produce new plants. There are no biological control agents currently available.

A number of herbicides have proven effective on Orange hawkweed. Chemical control requires several years' effort and generally will not succeed on its own.

While wildlife and livestock may consume non-native hawkweeds, intensive grazing only results in nearly all of the desirable vegetation being replaced.

Some invasive plant managers have had success with fertilizing to support competing vegetation, primarily in rangeland infestations.



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