

Scentless Chamomile

Matricaria maritima

Matricaria perforata

Provincial Designation: Noxious

Description:

Scentless Chamomile can behave as an annual, biennial, or sometimes a perennial. Plants can be very bushy and have an extensive, fibrous root system. Seedlings emerge throughout the growing season; fall seedlings overwinter and are usually first to flower in spring. One plant can produce up to a million tiny seeds. Scentless Chamomile and the very similarly flowered Oxeye Daisy are conspicuous - there are no native white-flowered daisies in Alberta.

Stems are erect to semi-erect, smooth and highly branched, growing up to 1 m tall.

Leaves are alternate and very finely divided into short segments (carrot-like) and odorless when crushed. Basal leaves disappear by flowering time.

Flowers are composed of a yellow central disk surrounded by white petals. The flowers are borne singly at the end of stems and have numerous bracts, arranged in overlapping rows.



Control

Scentless Chamomile is well adapted to heavy soils, persists under periodic flooding, and its seeds float readily on water, which aids in near monocultures to grow near ponds and streams. Yet, the plant also does well in dry areas and perennial forage crops. Dispersal by weed seed contamination in crop/grass seed and livestock forage is common.

Frequent, shallow tillage can help exhaust the seed bank by repeatedly destroying germinating seedlings. Seed production can be prevented if plants are mowed just before flowering, but it must be done often and at progressively lower cutting heights – plants can produce new flowers below the height of the last cut. Hand-pulling can prevent spread into new areas and is effective on small infestations. Burning spent plants can also prevent seed spread.

Several herbicides are effective at controlling Scentless Chamomile when applied to actively growing plants up to the flowering stage. Two biological control agents have been successfully established at some locations in Alberta.

Scentless Chamomile does not compete well with vigorous, healthy plant communities. Moderate grazing, avoiding soil disturbance, and insisting on the purity of purchased seed/forage can prevent this invasive plant from establishing new infestations.