

Wild Caraway

Carum carvi



Description:

Wild caraway is a biennial plant, producing a low growing rosette of leaves in its first year of growth, and then a flowering stalk (bolt) in the second year – it can even bolt and flower a third year before dying. It develops a narrow taproot and grows in a wide range of soil types. Bolting plants can tolerate some spring flooding and seedlings can survive light frosts.

Stems are erect, branched, and grow 60 to 90 cm tall. There can be several stems per plant.

Leaves are alternate and very finely divided (carrot-like). The leaves of first-year rosettes can be very similar to yarrow, a native plant.

Flowers are white, but occasionally pinkish, and occur in groups at the top of stems (compound umbels).



Control

'Wild' caraway is grown in western Canada as a spice crop, however it escaped cultivation and has been invading pastures, rangeland and natural areas for several years now. It is not utilized by livestock and can quickly displace nearly all other vegetation where infestations go uncontrolled. Infestations in forage crops have led to weed seed dispersal in baled hay.

The plant is easiest to control in its first year of growth with a residual herbicide. Once bolting has started, the plant becomes much more difficult to control – especially if it has been allowed to go to seed a couple of times.

Hand-pulling of bolting stalks is effective at preventing seed production, but at maturity the seed heads are extremely fragile and shatter easily. At this stage, a plastic bag can be carefully placed over the mature plant, and closed tightly around the stem while hand-pulling. Carefully done, this method can remove seed without accidentally spreading it. Collected seed should be disposed of in landfill-bound garbage or thoroughly burned. This plant's response to repeated mowing is to stay short (mowing height) and bloom.

New infestations of this invasive plant increase rapidly. Learn to recognize Wild caraway – early detection provides the best chances for eradication.

