

# TANSY RAGWORT

*Senecio jacobaea* L.

**Family:** Asteraceae (Sunflower).

**Other Scientific Names:** None.

**Other Common Names:** Common ragwort.

**Legal Status:** Provincial Noxious.



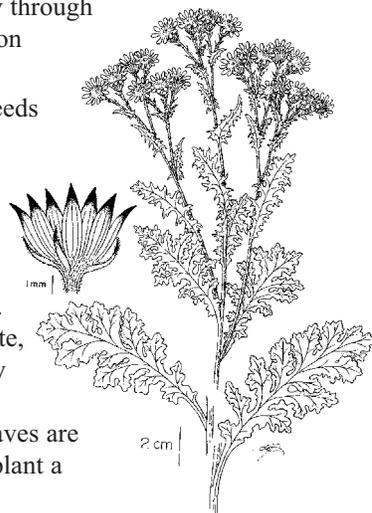
## Identification

**Growth form:** Biennial or short-lived perennial.

**Flower:** Several to many daisy-like, bright yellow flowers in flat-topped clusters. The black-tipped bracts of the flower heads are arranged in a single row. Plants flower from July through September, depending on geographic location.

**Seeds/Fruit:** Ribbed seeds are 1 mm long with a pappus of white hairs about 3 mm long.

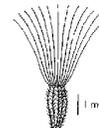
**Leaves:** Basal leaves are stalked, 4–20 cm long, and 2–6 cm wide. Stem leaves are alternate, becoming progressively smaller and stalkless moving upward. All leaves are deeply cut, giving the plant a ragged appearance



**Stems:** Mature plants are 0.2–1.2 m tall. The one to several stems are erect and are branched near the top.

**Roots:** A poorly developed to evident taproot with well-developed fibrous roots.

**Seedling:** The first 2–3 leaves are rounded with small teeth on the margin, but later leaves are deeply lobed. Star-shaped hairs are present on the first to fourth leaf stage but are later hairless (Royer and Dickinson 1999).



## Similar Species

**Exotics:** The leaves of common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) are sharply toothed, and the flowers look like yellow buttons because the ray flowers are absent.

**Natives:** Dryland ragwort (*Seneca eremophilus*) resembles tansy ragwort, but the leaf tips are pointed rather than rounded.

## Impacts

**Agricultural:** Tansy ragwort reduces forage production of pastures by up to 50% (BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Undated). Contains alkaloids that can poison livestock, but the plant is often avoided. Animals can be affected through contaminated hay or silage. Cattle and horses should not be grazed on pastures with more than 5% cover of tansy ragwort.

**Ecological:** Primarily a weed on agricultural land but has been appearing on coastal clear-cuts in BC (Douglas et al. 1998).

**Human:** Trace amounts of alkaloids appear in milk and honey produced from infested pastures, raising concerns for human consumption of these products.

## Habitat and Ecology

**General requirements:** Grows on disturbed sites in pastures, hayfields, roadsides, and clear-cuts.

**Distribution:** Frequent and considered a major concern in the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island

agricultural reporting regions; also present in the Okanagan. Found in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario (Frankton and Mulligan 1970).

**Historical:** Introduced from Eurasia.

**Life cycle:** A low-growing rosette is produced in the first year. Flower-bearing stems are produced in the second, and often subsequent, years. Seeds germinate in both spring and autumn, forming new rosettes.

**Mode of reproduction:** By seed.

**Seed production:** One plant can produce more than 150,000 seeds.

**Seed bank:** Seeds can remain dormant 4–5 years and remain viable over 20 years.

**Dispersal:** Primarily by wind, water, and animals.

**Hybridization:** No information available.

## Management

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**Biocontrol:** Five agents have been released in BC: *Tyria jacobaeae* (moth), *Botanophila seneciella* (fly), *Longitarsus flavicornis* (beetle), *Longitarsus jacobaeae* (beetle), and *Cochylis atricapitana* (moth). In BC, the cinnabar moth (*Tyria*) causes localized defoliation but fails to provide long-term control. *Longitarsus jacobaeae* has resulted in localized control, particularly in combination with the root-boring *Cochylis* moth.

**Mechanical:** Seed production can be prevented by repeated mowing before flowering is advanced. Plants mown after flowering can still set seed. Small infestations can be pulled by hand.

**Fire:** No information available.

**Herbicides:** Spring or mid-autumn applications of 2,4-D are effective at managing young seedlings and rosettes. Dicamba, or a combination of dicamba and 2,4-D, is effective at more advanced growth stages. Consult the most recent edition of BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Crop Production Guides for specific recommendations. **Before applying**

**herbicides, read the label for full use and precautionary instructions.**

**Cultural/Preventive:** Seed disturbed areas to perennial grasses and forbs. Manage grazing animals to maintain perennial plant communities. Hand-pull plants and remove them from new infestations. Cut plants before they go to seed.

### Integrated Management Summary

Cultural, mechanical, chemical, and biological control methods are all possible. Use cultural and mechanical methods on small infestations. Apply herbicides to manage medium-sized populations, and use biocontrol for large infestations where it is impractical to use other management methods. Plants must be cut prior to formation of the easily wind-blown seeds.

## References

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BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Undated. *Tansy Ragwort in British Columbia*. Fact Sheet.

Douglas, G. W., G. B. Straley, D. Meidinger, and J. Pojar. 1998. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*. Vol. 1: *Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons (Aceraceae through Asteraceae)*. Province of British Columbia.

Frankton, C., and G. A. Mulligan. 1970. *Weeds of Canada*. Publication 948. Ottawa: Canada Department of Agriculture.

Royer, F., and R. Dickinson. 1999. *Weeds of Canada and the Northern United States*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

