Rush skeletonweed

Colorado Department of Agriculture

305 Interlocken Pkwy
Broomfield, CO 80021

(303) 869-9030
weeds@state.co.us

Rush skeletonweed Identification and Management

Identification and Impacts

Rush skeletonweed *(Chondrilla juncea)* is a native to Asia and the Mediterranean region. It is a herbaceous perennial that reproduces by seed and by an extensive root system. The wiry stems of the plant can grow from 1 to 4 feet tall. Stems are hairy from the ground up to 4 to 6 inches high with smooth stems above. These brown hairs are a distinguishing characteristic. Stems and leaves contain a milky latex if cut. The leaves on stems are sharply toothed. The hairless basal leaves are 2 to 5 inches long and 1/2 to 2 inches wide. Flowers are yellow and occur from mid-July to when frost occurs. Flower heads are less than 1 inch in diameter and consist of 9 to 12 flowers, although they may appear to be one. A vigorous mature plant can produce up to 1,500 flowers capable of distributing 20,000 seeds. Plants usually overwinter as rosettes which closely resemble common dandelion.

Habitat for rush skeletonweed include roadsides, rangelands, grain fields, and pastures. The plant prefers well drained soils and disturbance aids establishment. This weed thrives on well-drained and rocky or sandy textured soil, but can flourish in both very wet and very dry environments. The plant can regenerate if the root system is damaged by mechanical or cultivation practices. When damage occurs and root fragments sprout they can reduce crop yields and wildlife forage and habitat. The soil seed longevity is at least three years.

The key to effective control of rush skeletonweed is preventing the establishment of plant communities through sound land management practices. Maintain healthy pastures and rangeland and continually monitor your property for new infestations. If rush skeletonweed populations exist, an integrated weed management strategy is the only way to control and eradicate populations. There is no one control method that works. Details on the back of this sheet can help to create a management plan compatible with your site ecology.

Rush skeletonweed is designated as a "List A" species in the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. It is required to be eradicated wherever found in the State. For more information visit www.colorado.gov/ag/weeds and click on the Noxious Weed Management Program. Or call the State Weed Coordinator at the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Conservation Services Division, 303-239-4100.

Key ID Points

1. 1-4 ft. in height.
2. Stems and leaves contain milky latex.
3. Leaves are sharply toothed.
4. Brown hairs on first 4" to 6" of stem.

Photo clockwise, from lower left © Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign; Utah State University Archives; Richard Old; Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign and above, Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org.

Chondrilla juncea

Updated on: 7/2015

Management Recommendations

CULTURAL
Prevent the establishment of new infestations by minimizing disturbance and seed dispersal, eliminating seed production and maintaining healthy native communities. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service for seed mix recommendations. Maintain healthy pastures and prevent bare spots caused by overgrazing.

BIOLOGICAL
Biocontrol agents are not included in the prescribed management plans by the State for List A species. Eradication is the management objective of all List A's. For more information on biocontrol in Colorado, please contact the Palisade Insectary of the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 970-464-7916.

MECHANICAL
Diligent hand-pulling or digging can be effective for very small infestations only. New plants can arise from root fragments so check site often, removing any new growth. Hand-pull or dig when soil is moist and try to remove all roots. Be sure to bag removed specimens carefully as to not scatter seeds if plant is flowering. Mowing and cultivation are ineffective. Cultivation spreads root fragments increasing infestations.

Integrated Weed Management:

Preventing the establishment of this plant in Colorado is crucial since it is not yet known to exist in the state. Monitoring your land for infestations is key to early detection. Eradication requires intensive and persistent control efforts to effectively eliminate weed infestations and soil seed reserves.

The site must be monitored for at least 10 years after the last flowering adult plants have been eliminated and treatments repeated when necessary.

HERBICIDES

NOTE: The following are recommendations for herbicides that can be applied to range and pasturelands. Rates are approximate and based on equipment with an output of 30 gal/acre. Please read label for exact rates. **Always read, understand, and follow the label directions. The herbicide label is the LAW!**

Herbicide	Rate	Application Timing
Aminopyralid (Milestone)	5-7 oz./acre (start with 7 oz.) + 0.25% v/v non-ionic surfactant	Apply at rosette growth stage. (Spring to Early Summer)
Aminocyclopyrachlor + chlorsulfuron (Perspective)	4.75-8 oz. product/acre + 0.25% v/v non-ionic surfactant	Post-emergence in spring until flowering, or to fall rosettes. IMPORTANT: Applications greater than 5.5 oz. product/acre exceeds the threshold for selectivity. DO NOT treat in the root zone of desirable trees and shrubs. Not permitted for use in the San Luis Valley.
Additional herbicide recommendations for this and other species can be found at: www.colorado.gov/agconservation/CSUHerbicideRecommendations.pdf		

Top to bottom photos, © Utah State University Archive, Utah State University, Bugwood.org; Eric Coombs, Oregon Department of Agriculture; Gary L. Piper, Washington State University, Bugwood.org;