

## COMMON TANSY

*Tanacetum vulgare*



### Overview:

Common tansy is a perennial forb that reproduces by both seed and short rhizomes (underground horizontal roots). Introduced from Europe in the 1600's, its pungently aromatic foliage has been used medicinally, as an insect repellent, and for embalming.

Common tansy forms dense stands, and the plants contain alkaloids that are toxic to both humans and livestock if consumed in large quantities. Cases of livestock poisoning are rare, though, because tansy is unpalatable to grazing animals.

### Habitat:

It grows best in full sun and fertile, well-drained soil.

### Identification:

**Stems:** Stems are branched, erect, often purplish-red, and dotted with glands. There are many stems per plant and grow up to 1.5 m tall.

**Leaves:** Leaves alternate on the stem and are deeply divided into numerous narrow, individual leaflets with toothed edges.

**Flowers:** Flowers are yellow, numerous, and button-like, occurring in dense, flat-topped clusters at the tops of the stems.

**Seeds:** Seeds are yellowish brown achenes with short, five-toothed crowns.

### Prevention:

Because of its long medicinal and horticultural use, Common tansy is still available in plant nurseries and from herbal remedy suppliers. Gardeners should not purchase or grow Common tansy.

### Control:

**Grazing:** Common tansy is unpalatable to cattle and horses, but sheep and goats are reported to graze on it.

**Cultivation:** Since this plant is rhizomatous, flowering stems can regrow from severed roots, therefore cultivation is not a control option.

**Mechanical:** Regular mowing can reduce seed production but must be repeated to eliminate regrowth from rootstock. The most effective control method combines mowing or hand cutting with chemical control and encouraging competition from native vegetation. Repeated stem removal depletes the food energy stored in roots.

**Chemical:** Aminopyralid (alone in a product mix with 2,4-D), Chlorsulfuron (alone or in a product mix with Metsulfuron-

methyl), Metsulfuron-methyl (alone or in a product mix with Aminopyralid) and Tribenuron-methyl are registered for use on Common tansy. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

**Biological:** An agent search by CABI Switzerland was initiated in 2006. Since 2007, the Common Tansy Consortium (numerous American and Canadian organizations including the Alberta Invasive Species Council) has been funding research. The chemical variability of common tansy populations is being investigated with respect to host plant acceptance by bio-control agent candidates. A literature review and field surveys have resulted in focus on five potential agents: the flower-feeding moth *Isophrictis striatella*; the stem-mining weevil *Microplontus millefollii*; the root-feeding beetle *Longitarsus noricus*; the leaf-feeding beetle *Cassida stigmatica*; and the stem-mining longhorn beetle *Phytoecia nigricornis*<sup>1</sup>.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/plants/biocontrol/screenagents.htm#Commontansy>

