



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension

Coconino County



A Northern Arizona Homeowner's Guide To Identifying and Managing HORSEWEED

Common name(s): Horseweed, Canadian horseweed

Scientific name: *Conyza canadensis*

Family: Sunflower or Aster family (Asteraceae)

Reasons for concern: This plant is becoming a major weed problem. It produces thousands of tiny seeds that are easily dispersed far and wide by wind, and they can germinate over a very long period of time. It is reported to be resistant to glyphosate. It also contains allelopathic (toxic) chemicals that suppress the growth of nearby native vegetation.

Classification: Native

Special note: Native plants have evolved together over centuries with pollinators, birds, wildlife, and other native plants. We may not understand the role this native plant plays in our environment, so we may not want to completely eliminate it.

Botanical description: Erect, tall plant with many branches at top of stem.

Leaves: Bristly leaves alternate, crowded on either side of stem. Upper leaves are lance-shaped to long and narrow. Leaves at ground level are spoon-shaped to long and narrow, arranged in a circular formation (rosette).

Stem(s): Usually a single erect stem 1 to 5 feet tall. Sometimes several stems. Unbranched at the base but many branches above. Stem can re-grow after being cut.

Flowers: Flower head (inflorescence) of many small, inconspicuous flowers with yellow center and white (sometimes purplish) ray petals, at top of stem. Blooms June through September.

Seeds: Seed production June through September.

Roots: Taproot



Horseweed. Image credit: Max Licher, swbiodiversity.org/seinet

Native to: North American grasslands

Where it grows: Disturbed areas, waste places, pastures, roadsides at elevations of 900 to 8,200 feet. Likes sun. Widespread throughout North America.

Life cycle: Winter or summer annual

Reproduction: By seed

Weedy characteristics: Horseweed can easily take over disturbed areas since it seeds prolifically and spreads rapidly. It will re-grow if the stem is broken off. It also contains allelopathic (toxic) chemicals that suppress the growth of nearby native vegetation.

Control strategies: Do not let them go to seed. Hand pull or dig out seedlings. Dig out more mature plants with the roots, but be careful not to disturb the soil too much. Step down any loose dirt to prevent seeds from finding a welcome environment to germinate. If you cut off stem or cannot get the root, check back to see if plant has started to re-grow. Plant desirable native species to outcompete invasive plants.

Images:



Horseweed stem leaves. Image credit: Patrick Alexander, swbiodiversity.org/seinet



Horseweed flower heads. Image credit: Max Licher, swbiodiversity.org/seinet



Horseweed rosette. Image credit: Joseph M. DiTomaso,
University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org

References:

- **Horseweed** University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources - IPM Weed gallery
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/WEEDS/horseweed.html>
- **Canadian Horseweed** USDA NRCS Plant Guide
https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_coca5.pdf

<https://nazinvasiveplants.org>

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