Last Updated 27-04-2011

Orange Hawkweed

(Hieracium aurantiacum)

Provincial Designation: Prohibited Noxious

PHOTOS: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Overview:

Native to Eurasia, Orange hawkweed was likely introduced as an ornamental plant because of its showy, fiery orange flowers. It is a perennial forb that reproduces by seed or stolons (short, strawberry-like runners). Seedlings forms a rosette and flowering bolts re-sprout from a small rhizome yearly thereafter. Runners are produced during flowering and extend 10 to 25 cm – these runners form new rosettes. It has a fibrous root system with a woody stem base.

The ancient Greeks believed hawks' feeding on the sap of hawkweed is what gave them their keen eyesight. Other common names are devil's paintbrush and red devil.

There are many native hawkweeds in North America but none produce stolons and their flowers are yellow or white.

Habitat:

Orange hawkweed is adapted to a wide range of temperatures and conditions – gravelly, acidic, full sun, part shade – but does requires well drained soils. It can successfully grow under coniferous forest canopy.

Identification:

Stems: Stems are erect, usually leafless, and covered with bristly hairs. They grow 15 to 90 cm tall and contain a milky sap. There may be one to several stems per plant.

Leaf & stem

Leaves: Leaves are mostly basal, elliptical, covered with bristly hairs, and are 10 to 15 cm long. Any stems leaves are much smaller.

Seed head

Flowers: Flowers are composed of ray flowers with square edged, notched petals. The orange-red flowers are borne in clusters of 5 to 30 heads at the ends of stems. The involucre (base of the flower) has long bristly hairs and blackish glands. This is the only hawkweed, native or introduced, to have orange flowers.

Seeds: The tiny black seeds (2 mm long) are ribbed achenes that have a tuft of bristles on one flattened end. Each flower will produce about 10 to 25 seeds that may be viable as long as seven years.

Prevention:

Orange hawkweed infestations usually originate from seed, but their very rapid expansion is the result of the stolons producing new plants. Untreated infestations quickly form dense mats of rosettes that exclude nearly all other vegetation. Early detection has the best chance of eradication. Once established, this weed is difficult to control.

Control:

Grazing: Orange hawkweed is unpalatable. Rangelands stressed by overgrazing are highly susceptible to invasion.

Cultivation: Repeated cultivation may be effective only in crop land situations. Small pieces of stolon can produce new plants.

Mechanical: Mowing will prevent seed production but strongly encourages vegetative reproduction. Hand-pulling or digging before flowering can very effective on small infestations, but it is important to remove as much root as possible and repeat efforts in subsequent years.

Chemical:[1] Picloram or a mixture of Picloram and 2,4-D can be effective early season. Some invasive plant managers have had success with fertilizing to support competing vegetation, primarily in rangeland infestations. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: A search for possible agents is currently underway by CABI and is funded by a consortium of Canadian and US sponsors.

1 Always follow the product labels. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the *Minor Use of Pesticides* regulation constitutes an offence under both the *Federal Pest Control Products Act and Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.*

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