University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

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A Northern Nevada Homeowner's Guide to Identifying and Managing Flixweed

Susan Donaldson, Water Quality and Weed Specialist

Wendy Hanson Mazet, Master Gardener Program Coordinator and Horticulturist

Other common names: Tansy mustard, herb sophia

Scientific name: *Descurainia sophia*

Family: Brassicaceae

Description: A bushy, much-branched plant that grows up to 2 or more feet tall, flixweed blooms early in the spring.

Leaves: The leaves are finely divided and hairy. The hairs are branched.

Stems: Stems are upright and branched. Plants grow in a rosette (ground-hugging form, see photo below right) until the flowering stems start growing.

Flowers: Tiny and yellow with four petals; arranged in branched structures. Blooms from early spring to summer.

Seeds: Produces narrow seed pods ½ to 1¼ inches long.

Roots: Has a short taproot.

Native to: Europe; naturalized in much of the United States

Where it grows: Gardens, landscaped areas, rangeland, vacant lots, roadsides and other disturbed or unmanaged sites

Life cycle: Winter annual (sprouts in fall or early winter), summer annual (sprouts in spring or summer), sometimes biennial (flowers and dies in the second year of growth)

Reproduction: Reproduces by seed

Typical plant growing in disturbed site.

Rosettes have finely divided leaves.

Control methods: Flixweed is a prolific seed-producer, and can build up a reserve of seed in the soil. The seeds survive for years in the soil. Plants are most easily removed when they are small rosettes (ground-hugging forms). Control relies on preventing the production of seed.

Mechanical: Dig, hoe or pull young plants. Use mechanical control methods prior to formation of flowers and seeds. Mow to prevent flowering and production of seed.

Cultural: Plant desirable vegetation to compete with tumble mustard; minimize soil disturbance.

Biological: Do not graze. Eating large quantities of flowers can be toxic to livestock, and can result in death.

Chemical: Apply broadleaf-selective herbicides on young plants.

References:

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The leaves are fern-like in appearance.

Flowers are tiny, yellow and produce long, slender seed pods.

The flower are arranged in a branched structure.

(All photos by S. Donaldson)