

Tansy Ragwort

Invasive Species Alert Sheet

Regional Invasive Species Program

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and health impacts.

Local governments and partners are asking for help from all residents to address **tansy ragwort** (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) outbreaks on private property and public lands. Homeowners can manage this plant themselves or reach out to professionals for assistance. **Caution:** all plant parts can cause skin irritation in humans, and can cause poisoning in humans and livestock if ingested.

Introduced from Europe, tansy ragwort is often spread in contaminated hay. It is a poisonous biennial found on open, sunny sites such as in pastures and on roadsides.

Why is tansy ragwort a problem?

- **Poisonous** when fresh or dry to cattle, horses, some goats, pets and people - **can be fatal**
- **Contaminates hay crops**, milk and honey from affected animals
- **Highly invasive**, crowds out native species and forage plants, spreads rapidly by root fragments or wind-blown seed

What does it look like?

- **Flowers:** in bright yellow, flat topped, daisy-like clusters, each cluster is composed of many ray flowers with ~13 petals and yellow-orange centres
- **Stems:** stout, erect or slightly spreading to 1m or more, may be branched
- **Leaves:** young plants appear as rosettes with ruffled leaves, mature leaves are dark green on top, whitish-green below, with deeply cut, blunt-toothed lobes with a ragged look
- **Seeds:** ribbed with a white pappus, wind-carried, remain viable for over 20 years
- **Roots:** taproot and fibrous side roots
- **Could be confused with:** Common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), which has button-like flowers with no petals and flattened, fern-like leaves.

Habitat and biology:

- Found in **heavily grazed pastures & along roads and trails**, quickly invades newly disturbed areas
- Thrives in full sun with moderately moist to dry soils
- A biennial in the Asteraceae (sunflower) family, germinates in fall or early winter, lives through the next year as a rosette, then dies the following year after producing flowers and seeds. Spreads by rhizomes and seeds.
- Flowers June-October, produces up to 150,000 seeds per plant, seeds spread by wind, mowing or carried on animals. Seeds can persist in soil more than 20 years.
- Can produce more shoots and flowers when stimulated by mowing, grazing or pulling
- Watch for tansy ragwort in **fill soil, hay and seed**, especially these materials coming from outside your area. Clean vehicles and equipment regularly. Check for rosettes (young plants) in the spring. Immediately re-seed areas of bare soil in fields and pastures.



Tansy ragwort

Prevention:

- **Prevent spread:** Don't buy, grow or trade this plant. Please clean off shoes, pets, equipment, vehicles when in areas where this species may be present. Use clean soil, gravel and hay/straw free from seeds – buy local!

What to do if you spot a tansy ragwort plant:

- **Caution:** all plant parts cause poisoning in humans or livestock if ingested. Gloves and long sleeved clothing should be worn to prevent skin irritation.
- **First Priority:** Deplete future seed sources by removing all flowers and seed heads to prevent spread. Most removal methods will need to be continued for a number of years as the seeds survive for many years in soil.
- If you have tansy ragwort, work to remove it as soon as possible. Efforts are most likely to succeed when patches are small and manageable. Use an integrated approach of monitoring for seedlings and re-growth and control efforts.
- If you spot plants infested with **black striped caterpillars (cinnabar moth)**, these are a biological control agent. Disperse the caterpillars to new tansy ragwort plants as they will eat the plant and prevent flowering and seed production.
- **Inform:** please report outbreaks to the contacts listed below for support and monitoring
- **Remove:** if you have an outbreak on your property, please follow instructions below for removal
- **Monitor:** return in spring and fall for a few years to monitor growth and remove new plants
- **Replant:** especially in disturbed areas, replant with non-invasive or native plants

For small infestations (less than 1m2)

- Dig up the **whole plant and remove manually** - be careful to removal all root fragments
- Flowers will go to seed after being dug up, so bag and discard any stalks with flowers. Burning is not recommended due to the toxicity of plant and because heat can cause plants to form seeds.

Tansy ragwort first year rosette.

Cinnabar moths are helpful in controlling tansy ragwort.



For large infestations:

- The most effective treatment is a combination of **aggressive cutting** to prevent seeding and re-seeding the site with other species. Heavy cultivation may also be successful.
- Monitor regularly for re-growth, and remove any new plants that appear.

Proper disposal:

- The best option is to place all plant parts in garbage bags labelled "invasive species" and take to the Hartland Landfill.
- **Do not compost!** Flowers can still form viable seeds.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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