

# Houndstongue



The common name for this weed results from the size and shape of the rosette leaves which resemble a dog's tongue



Hikers help spread this weed



Houndstongue is a taprooted biennial to short-lived perennial plant in the Boraginaceae family. This soft, hairy plant forms a low growing rosette of leaves in its first year and then bolts in the second year to form a plant 1 to 4 feet tall.

The leaves are hairy, have a distinct vein and resemble a dog's tongue. They alternate up the stem, growing up to 12 inches long and 3 inches wide at the bottom, growing smaller up the stem. The dull reddish-purple color flowers are small and originate on the upper part of the stem. Flowering occurs from May through July.

The rounded, triangular shaped seeds are brown to grayish-brown and covered with short, hooked prickles. This plant produces more than 600 seeds per plant that attach easily to clothes and passing animals, contributing to its spread.

Often found in pastures, Houndstongue contains large quantities of toxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids which can cause liver damage in animals. Cattle and horse deaths have occurred from eating hay contaminated with Houndstongue. Symptoms of poisoning include weight loss, jaundice, photosensitization, diarrhea, convulsions and coma.

## **Control Measures:**

**Mechanical:** Isolated plants and small patches of this weed can be hand-pulled, being sure to remove as much of the root as possible.

Cutting second year plants greatly reduces seed production and spread potential. Houndstongue will not withstand regular cultivation, digging, pulling and cutting if done frequently. If done after flowering, plants need to be removed from the site and disposed of to prevent seed spread.

**Cultural:** Good vigorous grass cover will prevent heavy weed growth, but will not totally prevent it.

**Chemical:** Houndstongue can be controlled with selective herbicides, being sure to add a surfactant to the spray mix to help the chemical penetrate the hairy leaf surface.

2,4-D can be applied in the spring while the plant is actively growing, but before bloom stage. Tordon, Banvel or Escort can be applied anytime during the growing season.

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For Additional Information on Noxious Weeds, their Control and the State Weed Law, Visit our Website at:

**[www.spokanecounty.org/weedboard](http://www.spokanecounty.org/weedboard)**

*Read and follow all label instructions when applying herbicides. Trade names have been used to simplify instructions and no endorsement or warranty is expressed or implied.*