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Pocket Field Guide to Kentucky's Common Weeds and Other Unwanted Plants

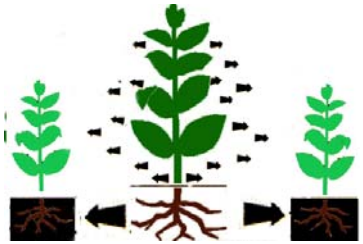
Common Dandelion,

Common Weeds

A weed is any plant, considered by the user, to be a nuisance, and is normally applied to unwanted plants in human-made settings, like a garden, lawn, agricultural area, parks, woods, or other natural settings. More specifically, the term is applied to describe native or non-native plants that grow and reproduce aggressively.

Weeds may be unwanted because they are unsightly, or they limit the growth of other plants by blocking light or using up nutrients from the soil. They can also be considered a weed if they harbor and spread path pathogens that can infect and degrade the quality of a crop or horticultural plants. Weeds may be a nuisance because they have thorns or prickles, cause skin irritation, act as a poison to livestock, or parts of the plant may come off and attach to fur and clothes.

In a general sense, the term weed is a subjective one, without any classification value, since a weed is not a weed if it is growing where it is wanted or where it belongs. A number of "weeds" have been used in gardens or other cultivated-plant settings, such as wildflower gardens, herb gardens, or gardens designed to attract or sustain wildlife.



Allelopathy helps some plants spread by preventing other plants from growing nearby.

The most important characteristic that most weeds share is their ability to reproduce often, quickly, and/or easily, have seeds that persist in the soil bank for many years, or have short life spans with multiple generations in the same growing season. Perennial weeds often have underground stems that spread out under the soil surface, or, like ground ivy, have creeping stems that spread out over the ground. A number of weedy species have developed allelopathy, which is a chemical way to prevent the germination or growth of neighboring plants.

Most of the species listed here may be controlled by a 2% glyphosate solution, which is the approximate solution found in many pre-mixed products. Again, READ THE LABEL carefully to make sure you are purchasing a glyphosate solution that is 1.8% - 2%. A lesser amount may not kill the weed successfully.

Exceptions to the 2% rule include:

Chinese Yam	30%	Common Reed*	
Privet	20%	Winter Creeper	4%
Common Burdock	20%	Common Teasel	12%

*The Common Reed should be controlled by a licensed herbicide applicator.

For further information about Common Weeds, Exotic Invasive Species, and Toxic Plants, please visit our Web site at:

http://www.louisvilleky.gov/LWC/ch_water_quality/
Wellhead Protection

To order a copy on disk of our "Homeowner's Guidebook of Native Plants, Integrated Pest Management, and Pollution Prevention", please contact:

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Winter Creeper *Euonymus fortunei*	**Yellow Nutsedge** *Cyperus esculentus*	**Yellow Rocket** *Barbarea vulgaris*
	Louisville Water Company 550 S. 3rd Street Louisville, KY 40202 For more information, please visit our web site: http://www.louisvilleky.gov/LWC/ch_water_quality/ under Wellhead Protection	
Yellow Sweet Clover, (Toxic) *Melilotus officianlis*		

Weed Control

Control of the weeds, exotic invasive species, and toxic plants is very important in maintaining the natural ecosystem of your area. However, for many of the species listed here, seeds may remain in the soil bank for long periods of time, so control may be on-going for several years. For example, kudzu seeds may lie dormant for 50 years, then sprout and create a problem again.

The US EPA recommends the use of a non-selective herbicide for use in weed control. The term "non-selective" means that the herbicide will kill all forms of plant life, so when applying the herbicide, make sure to protect the desirable plants located nearby. The chemical name of the specific herbicide recommended for us is glyphosate.

Glyphosate may be found under many name brands. Before you purchase an herbicide, first identify the plant, then, READ THE LABEL on the pre-packaged herbicide carefully, to make sure you are purchasing the product that is needed for the job.

The plants listed here as common weeds are but a sampling of the plants considered being 'weeds' that are common to Kentucky. Some plants that are desirable to promote wildlife growth and habitat are considered to be 'weeds' in the agricultural industry. Some plants are known to promote wildlife habitat and growth, but are listed as non-native, invasive threats by the Kentucky Plant Council. If cultivating a plant listed here as a 'weed' or non-native, invasive species for decorative purposes, to promote wildlife, for a wildflower garden, or for an herb garden, be careful that the plant does not spread and compete with native plants that are more nutritious and less invasive.

Some of the plants listed here may require professional identification prior to treatment for control, in order to protect closely related native species. Contact your County Cooperative Extension for help in identifying plants. In the Louisville/Metro area, you can contact the Jefferson County Cooperative Extension at 502-569-2344.

Non-native Invasive Species

A plant is considered exotic, (alien, foreign, non-indigenous, non-native), when it has been introduced by humans to a location outside its native or natural range. Most invasive, exotic plants have escaped cultivation or have spread from its origin and have become a problem or a potential problem in natural biological communities.

Kudzu is an exotic plant that has spread from Japan and China to the US. Local, state, and the federal governments spend millions of dollars annually to control the spread of kudzu, with limited success. Seeds can remain dormant in the ground for 50 years or more.

The real issue is the impact that exotic plants have on native ecologies.

Exotic plants have shown that they can alter ecosystem processes, displace native species, support populations of non-

native animals, fungi, or microbes, hybridize with native species and alter gene pools.

European settlers brought hundreds of plants to North America to their home lands for use as food, medicine, and for ornamental, sentimental, and other purposes. These plants, however much a part of our current landscapes and ecosystems, are nonetheless exotic, since they were moved here by people. Unfortunately, many of these have become invasive pests that are having serious impacts to native species and ecosystems. Exotic plant sales are still in practice today.

What makes an Exotic Species Invasive?

Many non-native species exist in apparent harmony in environments where they were introduced. The most important aspect of an alien plant is how it responds to a new environment. An invasive species is one that displays rapid growth and spreads, establishes over large areas, and persists.

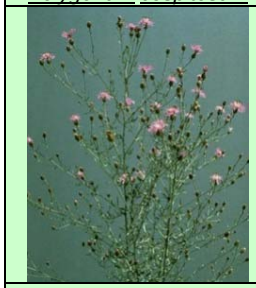
Queen Anne's Lace was introduced by European settlers in the 1600's. A form of wild carrot, it has a variety of medicinal uses.

Invasiveness is characterized by robust vegetative growth, high reproductive rate, abundant seed production, high seed germination rate, and longevity. Even some native plants can exhibit invasive tendencies in certain situations.

According to the Plant Conservation Alliance' Alien Plant Working Group about 1,000 plant species have been reported as being invasive in natural areas in the U.S. This represents an astonishing one-third or so of the exotic plant species that are established and self-reproducing in the wild.

Some invasive species were planted intentionally for erosion control, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat enhancement, and ornamental purposes. Others have escaped from arboretums, botanical gardens, and our own backyards. Free from the complex array of natural controls present in their native lands, (including herbivores, parasites, and diseases), some exotic plants may experience rapid and unrestricted growth in new environments

		
Velvet Grass *Holcus lanatus*	**Velvet Leaf** *Abutilon theophrasti*	**Vernal Whitlow Grass** *Draba verna*
		
Watercress *Rorrippa nasturtium-agaticum*	**Water Hemlock** *Cicuta maculata*	**White Morning Glory** *Ipomoea lacunose*
		
White Snakeroot *Eupatorium rugosum*	**White Sweet Clover, (Toxic)** *Melilotus al;ba*	**Wild Garlic** *Allium vineale*
		
Wild Onion *Allium canadense*	**Wild Violet** *Viola pradricola*	**Willow Leaf Lettuce** *Lactuca saligna*

		
Smartweed *Polygonum cespitosum*	**Speargrass** *Poa annua*	**Speedwell** *Veronica officianalis*
		
Spotted Knapweedl *Centaurea biebersteinii*	**Spotted Spurge** *Euphorbia maculate*	**Star of Bethlehem** *Ornithoglaum umbellatum*
		
Sulphur Five-Fingers *Potentilla recta*	**Tall Ironweed** *Veronia altissima* *also a Native Wildflower	**Tall Morning Glory** *Ipomoea purpurea*
		
Thyme-leaf Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia*	**Tobacco** *Nicotina ssp.*	**Trumpet Creeper** *Campsis radicans* *also a Native Wildflower

Invasive species impact native plants, animals, and natural ecosystems by:

- Reducing biodiversity;
- Altering hydrologic conditions;
- Altering soil characteristics;
- Interfering with natural selection;
- Repelling or poisoning native insects;
- Competing for pollinators
- Displacing rare plant species;
- Increasing predation on native birds due to removal of natural habitat and food sources;
- Serving as reservoirs of plant pathogens;
- Displacing complex communities with single species monocultures; and
- Diluting the genetic composition of native plants through hybridization.

Table Color Code

The table shown on the following pages illustrates common weeds, exotic invasive plants, and toxic plants found within the state. Common weeds were described by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and researched for this list. The Kentucky Exotic Pest Plant Council also provided information about the significant, severe, and lesser threats of exotic plants on Kentucky's ecosystems. Lastly, for safety's sake, toxic plants were included for those homeowners that have children or own pets.

Common Weeds

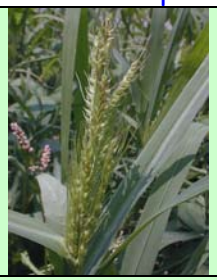
Exotic Invasive, Severe, Significant, or Lesser Threat

Severely or Moderately Toxic Plant

The table listed here includes small plants and vines only. Some tree and shrub species are considered to be exotic invasive species, but are not included within this listing.

Pocket Guide to Common Kentucky Weeds and Exotic, Invasive Species

Akebia
Akebia guinata



Barnyard Grass
Echinochloa crus-galil

Bermuda Grass
Cynodon dactylon

Bigroot Morning Glory
Ipomoea pandurata

Bitter Nightshade
Solanum dulcamara

Black Medic
Medicago lupulina

Blackseed Plantain
Plantago rugelii

Brackenfern
Pteridium aquilinum

Broadleaf Plantain
Plantago major

Buckhorn Plantain
Plantago lanceolata

Bulbous Buttercup
Ranunculus bulbosus

Burcucumber
Sicyos angulatus

diversilobum

Purple Loosestrife
Lythrum salicaria

Purple Morning Glory
Ipomoea purpurea

Purslane
Potuculaca oleracea

Quackgrass
Agropyron repens

Queen Anne's Lace
Daucus carota

Ragwort
Senjio sp.

Redroot Pigweed
Amaranthus retroflexus

Red Sorrel
Rume acetosella

Roughstalk Bluegrass
Poa trivialis

Selfheal
Prunell vulgaris

Shepherdspurse
Capsella bursapastoris

Sibara
Sibara virginica

Nutsedge
Cyperus rotundus

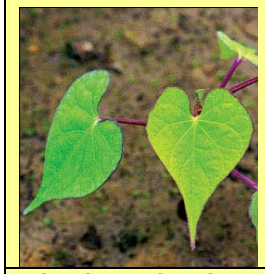
Oleanderl
Nerium oleander

Orchardgrass
Dactylis glomerata

Oxeye Daisy
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum

Oriental Bittersweet
Celastrus orbiculatus

Pennsylvania Smartweed
Polygonum pensylvanicum



Pitted Morningglory
Ipomoea lacunosa

Poison Hemlock, (Toxic)
Conium maculatum

Poison Ivy
Taxicodendron radicans

Poison Oak
Taxicodendron

Prickly Sida
Sida spinosa

Purple Deadnettle
Lamium purpureum

Canada Bluegrass
Poa compressa

Carolina Geranium
Geranium carolinianum

Carpetweed
Mollugo verticillata

Castorbean
Ricinus communis

Catnip

Chickweed
Stellaria media

Chicory
Cichorium intybus

Chinese Yam
Dioscorea oppositifolia

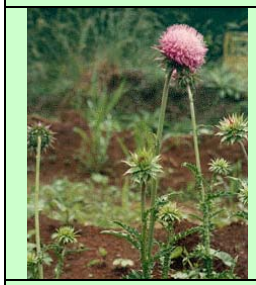
Clammy Groundcherry
Physalis heterophylla

Cleavers
Galium pedemmontanum

Common Burdock
Arctium minus

Common Cocklebur, (Toxic)
Xanthium strumarium

		
Common Mallow *Malva neglecta*	**Common Milkweed** *Asclepias syriaca*	**Common Ragweed** *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*
		
Common Reed *Phragmites australis*	**Common St. John's Wort** *Hypericum perforatum*	**Common Teasel** *Dipsacus sylvestris*
		
Common Yellow Wood Sorrell *Oxalis stricta*	**Corn Gromwell** *Lithospermum arvense*	**Crabgrass** *Digitaria ischaemum*
		
Creeping Bentgrass *Agrostis palustris*	**Crown Vetch** *Coronilla varia*	**Curly Dock** *Rumex crispus*

		
Love Grass *Eragrostis cilianensis*	**Lupine** *Lupinus polyphyllus*	**Mexican Tea Plant** *Cheoipodium ambrosioides*
		
Miniature Beefsteak *Mosla dianthera*	**Mint** *Mentha piperita, Mentha spicata*	**Miscanthus** *Miscanthus sinensis*
		
Motherwort *Leonurus cardiaca*	**Mouse Ear Chickweed** *Cerastiuim vulgatum*	**Multiflora Rosel** *Rosa multiflora*
		
Musk Thistle *Cardus nutans*	**Mustard Family** *Brassica ssp.*	**Nimblewill** *Muhlenbergia shreberi*

Japanese Stiltgrass
Microstegium vimineum

Japanese Honeysuckle
Lonicera japonica

Japanese Knotweed
Polygonum cuspidatum

Jimsonweed, (Toxic)
Datura stramontium

Johnson Grass, (Toxic)
Sorghum halepense

Kentucky Bluegrass
Poa pratensis

Kentucky 31 Tall Fescue
Festuca elatior

Korean Lespedeza
Lespedeza stipulacea

Kudzu
Pueraria lobata

Lady's Thumb
Polygonum persicaria

Lamb's Quarters
Chenopodium album

Lesser Periwinkle
Vinca minor

Cutleaf Groundcherry
Physalis angulata

Dallasgrass
Paspalum dilatatum

Dandelion
Taraxacum officinale

Day Lily
Hemerocallis fulva

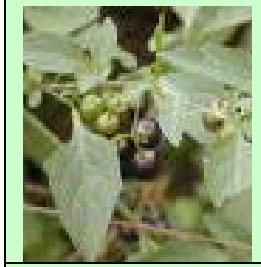
Dayflower
Commelina communis

Depford Pink
Dianthus armeria

Dock, Sheep Sorrell
Rumex acetosella

Dwarf Larkspur
Delphinium tricorne

Easter Lily
Lilium longiflorum



Eastern Black Nightshade, (Toxic)
Solanum ptycanthum

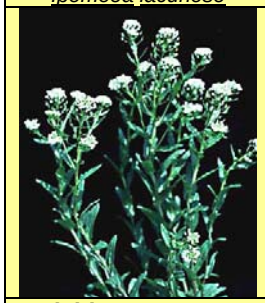
Eclipta
Eclipta prostrate

English Ivy
Hedera helix

Entireleaf Morning Glory
Ipomoea lacunose

Field Bindweed
Convolvulus arvensis

Field Cress
Thlaspi perfoliatm



Field Pennycress
Thlaspi arvense

Field Pepperwood
Lepidiuim campestre

Garlic Mustard
Alliaria petiolata

Giant Ragweed
Ambrosia trifida

Goosegrass
Eleusine indica

Green False Hellebore
Veratrum woodii

Green Foxtail
Setaria viridis

Ground Ivy
Glechoma hederacea

Hairy Bittercress
Gardamine hirsuta

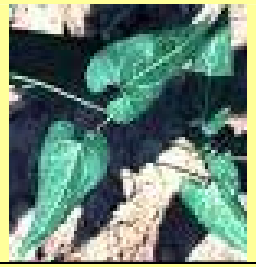
Hairy Galinsoga
Galinsoga ciliate

Hairy Jointgrass
Arthraxon hispidus

Hedge Bindweed
Calystegia sepium

Hemp Dogbane
Apocynum cannabinum

Henbit
Lamium amplexcaule



Honeyvine Milkweed
Ampelamus albidus

Horsenettle
Solanum carolinense

Horsetail
Equisetum arvese

Horseweed
Conyza canadensis

Indian Strawberry
Duchesnea indica

Italian Rye Grass
Lolium multiflorum

Ivy-leaved Morning Glory
Ipomoea hederacea