

# Mason County Noxious Weed Alert

Aster Family

**European coltsfoot**

*Tussilago farfara*

## Identification Tips

- Flowers are yellow; similar to a dandelion.
- Flowering stems emerge before leaves and grow up to 20 inches tall.
- Mature seeds are white and fuzzy, like a dandelion. White fuzz is called "pappus".
- Two types of leaves: basal and stem leaves.
- Stem leaves are 0.2 to 1 inch long, alternate and scale like with a purple tint.
- Basal leaves are heart to coltsfoot shaped, 1.2 to 13.8 inches long.
- Undersides of basal leaves are white and wooly.



## Regulated Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

## Biology

- Herbaceous perennial.
- Reproduces by seed or rhizomes.
- One plant can produce around 3,500 seeds.
- Seeds are wind carried and can travel several hundred yards.
- Seeds remain viable for up to 3 months.
- Flowering stems develop in January and bloom by March or April.



The leaves of European coltsfoot starting to emerge.

## Impacts

- Outcompetes native herbaceous plants and ground covers.
- Reduces forage and habitat for wildlife.
- Emerges early in the season, reducing establishment of native vegetation.
- Contains trace amounts of toxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids, known to be damaging and potentially carcinogenic to the liver.
- Can establish in riparian areas, negatively impacting restoration efforts.

## Distribution

- Native to Europe and North Africa.
- Brought to the United States by early settlers for its medicinal properties, it was first documented in North America in the 1840's.
- Prefers to grow in alkaline, moist soil and shaded environments.
- Will also invade disturbed, open sites such as gravel pits, roadsides, and ravines.

**QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:**

**(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or [patriciag@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:patriciag@co.mason.wa.us)**

**<https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/>**

## What You Can Do

Control of European coltsfoot is a legal requirement in Mason County. It is not yet widespread in the county. Help stop the spread of this noxious weed by checking your yard, parks, and roadsides in your area in early spring for flowering plants. By eliminating existing plants, we can keep this plant from spreading. Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board if you see European coltsfoot around Mason County.

## Control Methods

For the best results, control methods should be carried out over several years. Survey your yard and neighboring properties for European coltsfoot. Initiate control or report infestations when found. Choose control methods that are best suited to your site. After removal, sites must be monitored for several years for new plants. **Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control for more information.**

## Prevention

Do not plant European coltsfoot. Do not dump debris containing European coltsfoot in your yard or other natural areas. Infestations can start from rhizome fragments. Inspect recently purchased gravel, soil or fill material for European coltsfoot. If you already have European coltsfoot in your yard, take steps to remove this plant. Clean clothes and all equipment that have been used at a site with European coltsfoot.

## Mechanical Control

Mowing or cutting can control European coltsfoot, but will not eradicate infestations. This method delays plants from flowering and going to seed, but must be repeated throughout the season to be effective. Replant area with natives to add competition and decrease germination. Burying infestations will reduce the seed bank, but rhizomes can continue to grow through soil or mulch.



European coltsfoot seeds look similar to dandelion seeds with white pappus. Deadhead, place in a sealed bag, and dispose of in the trash when found.

## Don't confuse with native Coltsfoot



**Palmate coltsfoot** - *Petasites frigidus* is an herbaceous perennial with thin rhizomes. Flowers are white and grow in clusters at end of stems. Seeds have fuzzy pappus. Plants have separate stem and basal leaves. Basal leaves are divided into 5-7 lobes. Grows in moist thickets, swamps, clearings, and forested areas.

## Manual

Small sites can be controlled by hand pulling or digging. Carefully remove all rhizomes as they will resprout into new plants. A shovel or hoe will help to remove all rhizome fragments. Bag and dispose of all plant material in the trash. **Do not compost European coltsfoot.** Monitor site for several years and repeat manual control when necessary. Always replant the area with native species to add competition to European coltsfoot after any control method.

## Chemical

**Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.**

Herbicide is considered to be the most effective method to control medium to large patches of European coltsfoot. Products containing glyphosate, imazapyr, or triclopyr have been shown to be effective in treating European coltsfoot. Glyphosate and imazapyr are non-selective, and will injure all vegetation including grasses. Triclopyr is a selective herbicide and only impacts broadleaf species. Take care to reduce nontarget damage. Herbicide must be applied to fully emerged basal leaves, when temperatures are > 55° F.

The most effective control strategy integrates control methods. **Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.**

