

Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Mustard Family

Perennial Pepperweed

Lepidium latifolium

Identification Tips

- Herbaceous perennial that grows 2 to 6 feet tall.
- Leaves are alternate, waxy, hairless, and gray-green in color. Often dusted with powdery white caused by a rust fungus.
- White flowers, which form near the branch ends, are tiny and densely clustered; they produce small and round two-chambered fruits with tiny reddish-brown seeds.
- Roots are deep and vigorously spread from a semi-woody root crown; when cut they have a distinct horseradish smell.



Regulated Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Biology

- Perennial plant emerges in early spring, forming a rosette; flowers June - September.
- Some rosettes may form in late summer to early fall, which can overwinter.
- While perennial pepperweed is a prolific seed producer and can spread by seeds, they do not remain viable in the soil for long periods of time.
- Plants primarily reproduce via roots and root fragments, and spreads through flooding, tidal changes, and other disturbances.

Impacts

- Reduces pasture productivity and crop yields when found in agricultural settings.
- Increases erosion risk along riparian corridors and outcompetes native vegetation, leading to degraded habitat for wildlife, including ground-nesting birds.
- Perennial pepperweed pumps salt from deep in soil up through the roots and deposits them on the soil surface, which further inhibits native plants from establishing.

Distribution

- Native to Europe and Asia, it is now found throughout the United States.
- Infests pastures, roadsides, drainage ditches, floodplains, and wetlands. Perennial pepperweed tolerates saline and alkaline conditions.
- In Mason County, it has been found along the Hood Canal shoreline and adjacent public parks.



Perennial pepperweed has been found growing in estuarine habitats along the Hood Canal in Mason County, where it outcompetes native vegetation such as gumweed.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:

(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or patriciag@co.mason.wa.us

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

What You Can Do

Control of perennial pepperweed 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 property and public areas regularly for flowering plants. Contact the **Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board** if you see **perennial pepperweed in Mason County**.

Control Methods

Perennial pepperweed is very difficult to control, so prevention is a key control method. Once it is established, employ a variety of control methods throughout several growing seasons. Do not allow the plants to go to seed.

Prevention

It is illegal to transport or buy perennial pepperweed. Check for perennial pepperweed on your property, public beaches, waterways, and wetlands. Clean your shoes, equipment, and vehicles if visiting a site known to have perennial pepperweed. Plant disturbed areas near known perennial pepperweed infestations with desirable vegetation to reduce the potential for spread.

Manual Control

Manual control rarely eradicates perennial pepperweed populations. Seedlings can be hand pulled, but this will not control established plants as they can quickly resprout from their deep root reserves. Over several growing seasons, deadhead perennial pepperweed to prevent seed production.

Mechanical

Mechanical methods alone are not effective in controlling perennial pepperweed populations, and might even stimulate new growth and increase the density of the infestation. Combining a spring mowing at the bolting or flower bud stage with an application of herbicide to resprouting shoots once they have again reached the flower bud stage can be an effective control method. Look to the chemical control methods section for more information.



Don't confuse perennial pepperweed with native gumweed (*Grindelia integrifolia*).



Gumweed is a native plant that looks similar to perennial pepperweed and grows in similar places. However, gumweed is usually shorter than pepperweed and the stem leaves lack stalks. It produces a yellow composite flower with sticky bracts rather than perennial pepperweeds' white clustered flowerheads.

Cultural

Repeated, intensive sheep and goat grazing can significantly reduce the above-ground biomass of perennial pepperweed, but will not impact the massive below-ground root system. Either grazing must be continued for several years to deplete root reserves, or can be combined with herbicide application for long-term management.

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.

Foliar applications in combination with replanting desirable perennial vegetation is an effective control method for perennial pepperweed. Application should occur during the flower bud to early flowering stage. If incorporating mowing into your control regime, mow plants early in the season (bolting to flower bud stage) and then allow plants to resprout before applying herbicide.

In pastures, use selective broadleaf herbicides that will not harm grasses. A broadleaf herbicide containing chlorsulfuron is effective at bud stage, and can be combined with a surfactant to help penetrate the waxy leaves.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.