



Pacific Northwest
Vegetable Extension Group

Identification & Management of Emerging Vegetable Problems in the Pacific Northwest

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Yellow Nutsedge

Affected plant species:

Any annual crop; the most seriously affected crops include onion and other plants with a light canopy and narrow range of herbicides available for use.

Common name:

Yellow nutsedge

Latin binomial:

Cyperus esculentus (Cyperaceae)

Symptoms & key characteristics for identification:

Yellow nutsedge is a perennial weed with narrow leaves and triangular shaped stems. Flowers are yellowish-brown with narrow spikelets on the inflorescence (Fig. 1). The plant grows from 12 to 32 inches tall, and produces seeds that are 1/16 inch long and three-angled.



Fig. 1. Closeup view of a yellow nutsedge plant/flower.



Fig. 2. Severe nutsedge infestation in an onion crop.

Biology/epidemiology:

Yellow nutsedge can spread by seeds, but more commonly spreads by tubers, rhizomes and basal bulbs. It occurs in cultivated crops (Fig. 2), as well as on the margins of wetlands.

Management:

Mechanical control of yellow nutsedge is not likely to be successful. Rotation to crops with a quick growing dense canopy can reduce nutsedge through competition, however. Application

of herbicides can help reduce the size of yellow nutsedge populations, but persistence in making applications over several years will be required because nutsedge tubers are long lived. See PNW Weed Management Handbook for specific herbicide recommendations. To avoid mechanical spread, always clean equipment and implements thoroughly that have been in fields infested with nutsedge, before moving them to non-infested areas of the field or to other fields.

Selected references:

Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook: <http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/>

Washington Noxious Weed Control Board: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=43>

PNW VEG website at http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/path_team/vegpath_team.htm and Photo Gallery at http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/path_team/diseasegallery.htm