

Teasel (*Dipsacus spp.*)



DESCRIPTION:

Teasels are short-lived monocarpic perennials, that tend to form extensive monocultures. Introduced from Eurasia and northern Africa for the purpose of combing wool. Cut-leaved teasel (*Dipsacus laciniatus*) is the most likely to be encountered in the upper Midwest, whereas common teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), which is more widely distributed throughout the United States. Teasel prefers mesic habitats that are open and sunny, but is also found on drier sites. Teasel plants can produce 3,000 seeds per plant with up to 80% of the seeds germinating. The seeds, which remain viable for at least two years, are often moved by mowers and other equipment. Teasel are common along highways right-of-ways, utility corridors and adjacent land.

IDENTIFICATION:

The leaves of teasel are prickly, especially on the lower side of the midrib, forming cups that hold water near the stem. Compared to common teasel, cut-leaved teasel leaves are broader, divided and deeply lobed. The flowers appear at the end of the stem with a spiny head. Common teasel flowers are pale lavender whereas cut-leaved teasel flowers are white. In winter this plant is easy to identify because its dead stalk remains standing with its spiny flower head. In its first year teasel grows as a low rosette, similar to thistle or wild lettuce rosettes. Typically in their second growing system they bolt, flowers, dying after dispersing its seeds.

CONTROL METHODS:

Manual: Small teasel rosettes can be tackled with a dandelion digger and larger rosettes can be treated using a Parsnip Predator to sever the tap root well below the soil surface and removing the upper portion of the plant, Wear thick gloves as stems are prickly and sharp.

Mechanical: Mow large colonies of teasel when it is in full flower, and then repeatedly mowing as the plants attempt to re-flower. If you cut the stalks after flowering has completed, you must then bag-out the seed heads to prevent seed dispersal. Controlled burns in late spring will reduce seedling survival, but fires will not burn through dense monocultures.

Chemical: Herbicide is most effective if applied to basal rosettes in the spring and fall before the plants bolt, when the temperature is at least 50° F. Clopyralid (Transline®) and aminopyralid (Milestone®) are broadleaf specific which will prevent collateral damage to neighboring grasses. Glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) is useful on monocultures where harm to neighboring grasses is not an issue. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply herbicide according to the product label. If control is necessary after the plants have bolted and formed flowers we recommend mowing them down first to prevent seed production, then applying herbicide 1-2 weeks later.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Since this is a full-sun weed we recommend a diverse selection of prairie species to replace and compete against thistles in order to develop a more stable and productive plant community for the site. Contact us for specific recommendations.



First-year rosettes.



Small colony along a roadside.