

Hawkweeds

Hieracium sp.



Meadow Hawkweed's bristly stem. Tom Heutte, USDA Forest Service, www.forestryimages.org

OTHER HAWKWEEDS: Meadow hawkweed (*Hieracium pretense*), orange hawkweed (*H. aurantiacum*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*H. pilosella*), yellow hawkweed (*H. floribundum*), kind-devil hawkweed (*H. piloselloides*)

DESCRIPTION

Hawkweeds can be very difficult to correctly identify, since they can hybridize freely with both native and other non-native hawkweeds. Generally, hawkweeds are dandelion-like weeds with yellow or orange flower heads and are bristly or hairy all over. Stems exude a milky juice when broken. Flower heads are borne either singularly at the top of the stem or in clusters. Young plants form rosettes of **lance-shaped** leaves. Most exotic hawkweeds have **stolons (aboveground lateral stems)** and leafless stems. Most often, the bristly hairs (its type and abundance) located on the plants are used to distinguish between hawkweed species.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- dandelion-like plants with multiple flower heads (yellow or orange)
- bristly hairs located on the stems
- stems are leafless, or have a solitary leaf in middle of stem.
- presence of stolons

WHEN TO FIND HAWKWEEDS

Hawkweeds can be found during their flowering period, from late May/early June through to September.

WHERE TO FIND HAWKWEEDS

Hawkweeds are found predominantly in open fields, mountain meadows, clearings in forest zones, and along roadsides. They can also be found in permanent pastures, cleared timber units, abandoned farmland, or other modified habitats where the soil is well-drained, coarse-textured, and moderately low in organic matter.

WHAT TO DO

This plant can be dug up. Removing flower heads will help prevent spread.

Hawkweeds were introduced to the United States from Europe as herbal remedies and ornamentals. They are now found throughout the country, but pose a particular threat to the Pacific Northwest, as much of the PNW is very susceptible to hawkweed invasion. Fortunately most hawkweeds are not yet abundant in Oregon.

Hawkweeds reproduce primarily by seed and can produce many seeds that disperse long distances by wind. However, hawkweeds may also spread vegetatively through stolons, regenerating from root fragments, root buds, rhizomes or stolons, so any manual or mechanical control efforts need to be very thorough. Human activity can easily spread plant fragments.

Hawkweeds can produce dense mats of rosettes that prevent native species from establishing or surviving. They dominate sites by out-competing other species for water and nutrients and by releasing alleopathic compounds (toxic chemicals) from their decaying leaves. Large infestations are generally only successfully eradicated through herbicide treatments.

In Oregon, you are most likely to find **meadow or orange hawkweed**. Meadow and orange hawkweeds have stolons, and are best distinguished by the bristly and almost-leafless stems (although an occasional leaf might grow near the stems midpoint) and the flat-topped cluster of yellow or orange flower heads, appearing May through July, depending on elevation.

REFERENCES

Wilson, Linda M. (2006). Key to Identification of Invasive and Native Hawkweeds (*Hieracium sp.*) in the Pacific Northwest. B.C. Min. For. Range, For. Prac. Br., Kamloops, B.C.

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Orange Hawkweed.

Note basal leaves and leafless stem
Photo www.fs.fed.us



Orange Hawkweed.

Photo courtesy Jim Schultz