

Common Sheep Sorrel

Rumex acetosella L.

Alternate Names

field sorrel, red sorrel

Description

Common sheep sorrel is a perennial plant with a thin, erect stem growing from a slender rootstock. Leaves are long, narrow, and arrowhead-shaped with divergent basal lobes. The inflorescence is loose and reddish or yellowish. Stalks are jointed, and male and female flowers occur on separate plants. The ripe fruit is about 1/16 of an inch long.

Similar or Related Species

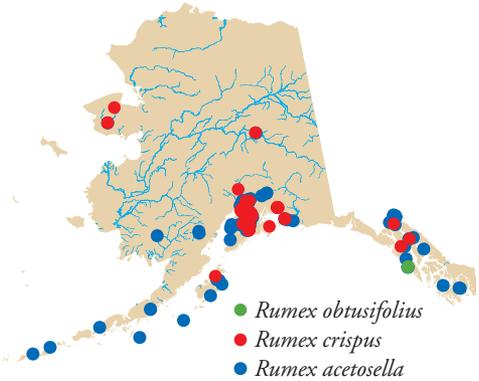
There are at least 15 species of *Rumex* in Alaska. Of these, 7 are exotic to Alaska (Hultén 1968). Curly dock (*R. crispus* L.) and bitter dock (*R. obtusifolius* L.) are two of the more common exotic species found in Alaska. Common sheep sorrel can be differentiated from all of these species by its arrowhead-shaped basal leaves.

Management

If hand-pulling of common sheep sorrel is attempted, the entire root mass and all rhizomes should be removed for effective control. Herbicide treatments can also be effective.

Notes

These plants came from Eurasia. Most of the leaves of this genus are edible and have been cultivated as salad greens.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Common sheep sorrel.

Family: Polygonaceae

Common sheep sorrel leaves are famous for their sour taste and have been used to treat inflammations, scurvy, and fevers. Curly dock is used for skin irritations, and its reddish-brown mature fruits can be used in baking. Bitter dock has been used as an astringent, blood purifier, contraceptive, and salve.

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KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Curly dock.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Curly dock.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Bitter dock.