

Common Tansy



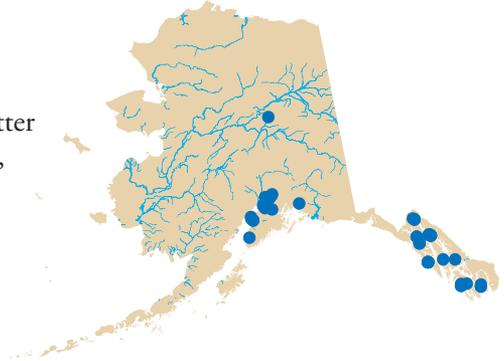
Tanacetum vulgare L.

Alternate Names

golden buttons, garden tansy, bitter buttons, hind-head, parsley-fern, ginger-plant

Synonyms

Chrysanthemum uliginosum Pers., *Chrysanthemum vulgare* (L.) Bernh., *Tanacetum vulgare* L. var. *crispum* DC.



Description

Common tansy is a rhizomatous perennial plant that grows 1½–6 feet high. The stems are often purplish-red at the base. Leaves are alternate, 2–10 inches long, 1½–3 inches wide, and deeply divided into numerous, toothed segments, giving the plant a feathery appearance. Common tansy produces a strong odor reminiscent of creosote. Stems have 20–200 yellow flowerheads without ray florets. Each flowerhead is button-like and ¼–½ of an inch wide. Seeds are yellowish-brown without pappus or with short 5-toothed crowns.



US Geological Survey photo by Chris McKee

Similar Species

Common tansy resembles tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea* L., included in this book), but tansy ragwort has ray florets and seeds with pappus. Lake Huron tansy (*Tanacetum bipinnatum* (L.) Schultz-Bip.) is native to Alaska and can be distinguished from common tansy by the presence of solitary to several flowerheads and the lack of odor.

Ecological Impact

Common tansy has been reported as unpalatable and somewhat poisonous to humans and livestock. It is also an alternate host for plant viruses (Royer and Dickinson 1999). It can grow along irrigation ditches and streams and restrict water flow (CWMA 2004).

Biology and Invasive Potential

Common tansy reproduces vigorously by both seed and rootstalks. Each plant is capable of producing over 50,000 seeds (Whitson et al. 2000, Royer and Dickinson 1999) and spreading quite aggressively by vegetative means (Plants for a Future 2002). It is generally restricted to



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

disturbed sites, although it has been observed growing in undisturbed beach meadows in Haines, Alaska (M. Shephard, pers. comm. 2004). Plants lack a well developed pappus and therefore are unlikely to be wind dispersed. Common tansy has been used and distributed as an ornamental and medicinal remedy, and it has escaped and become widely established. It is also a potential seed contaminant (CWMA 2004, GRIN 2004). It is known to germinate in vegetated areas (SWEPIC 2004) and is adapted to all soil textures. It requires well-drained moist soil but can tolerate acidic, neutral, and basic soils. It is not shade-tolerant (Plants for a Future 2002). Common tansy is listed as a noxious weed in Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, Wyoming, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Distribution and Abundance

Common tansy is a native of Europe and Western Asia and has become established in almost all of the United States and Canadian provinces. It has been reported from multiple locations in southcentral and southeast Alaska (AKEPIC Database 2004). This plant is generally found along roadsides, waste areas, streambanks, and pastures outside of Alaska (Whitson et al. 2000) and has established in beach meadows of Haines, Alaska.

Management

Common tansy is an aggressive weed that is difficult to control (CWMA 2004, Plants for a Future 2002). Hand-pulling without a shovel can be difficult due to the extensive rhizomes. This method will not eradicate an infestation but may prevent its spread. Mowing several times per year also aids in prevention but will not eradicate. Gloves and protective clothing should be used to keep the plant's toxins off of skin. Herbicide application is generally recommended and is most effective between the early flower bud and full bloom stage.

Notes

Common tansy has been used for a wide variety of medicinal remedies and as an insect repellent. It is toxic to humans and livestock when consumed in large quantities. Before the invention of embalming, tansy was used to line coffins before burying the dead because of its ability to repel vermin. More recently, chemical analysis has shown that common tansy contains compounds that can repel insects and inhibit growth of bacteria and fungi.



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