

# Flixweed

*Descurainia sophia* (L.) Webb ex Prantl.

## Synonyms

*Sisymbrium sophia* L., *Sophia sophia* (L.) Britt.

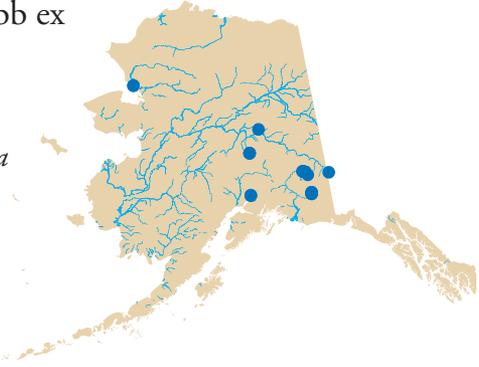
## Description

Flixweed grows to 3 feet, often branching above.

Stems and leaves have star-shaped hairs, giving the plant a grayish green color. Leaves are alternate, stalked, 1–4 inches long, and divided 2–3 times into narrow segments. The pale yellow flowers are borne in a terminal cluster. The fruit is a narrow pod, ½–1¼ inches long with a long stalk.

## Similar Species

Flixweed can be confused with a number of other pinnately leaved, yellow-flowered native mustards in Alaska. However, this species has star-shaped and not glandular hairs on the stem, which are visible under 5-10X magnification. Unlike flixweed, the native northern tansymustard (*Descurainia sophioides* (Fisch. ex Hook.) O.E. Schulz) has long stalks and fruits that extend beyond the flower. Mountain tansymustard (*Descurainia incana* (Bernh. ex Fisch. & C.A. Mey.) Dorn ssp. *incana*) has short fruit stalks that are strongly ascending and 4–8 seeds in each fruit, rather than flixweed's longer, spreading stalks and 10–20 seeds per fruit. *Erysimum* and *Sisymbrium* species are superficially similar to flixweed, but members of *Erysimum* have closely appressed, straight, 2- to 3-pronged hairs, and those of *Sisymbrium* have unbranched hairs.



US Geological Survey photo by Chris McKee

**Management**

Flixweed does not normally persist without disturbance and so may not require direct control measures (Densmore et al. 2001), although it is easily controlled using herbicide.

**Notes**

This plant was introduced from Europe. The common name flixweed comes from its formerly supposed remedy for flux, another word for dysentery. In 1742, “flux” first appeared in print in the English language in the 4th edition of London and Country Brewer in the form of flux ale, rumored to cause dysentery, while a flixweed concoction was recommended to cure it.



*XID Services photo by Richard Old*