

Ragwort

Jacobaea vulgaris

Jacobaea vulgaris (formerly *Senecio jacobaea*), commonly known as ragwort, is a highly toxic, invasive biennial weed often found in pastures, roadsides, and disturbed areas. It features bright yellow, daisy-like flowers in clusters, growing 30-120cm tall, and is recognized for its ability to dominate land and create poisonous conditions for livestock, especially cattle and horses.

Identification

Flowers: Numerous yellow daisy-like flowers with 11-13 rays and a golden center, clustered in dense, flat-topped corymbs.

Leaves: Deeply lobed, "kale-like" in appearance; basal leaves form a rosette, while stem leaves are alternate, sessile, and deeply pinnatifid (divided).

Stems: Erect, tough, often reddish or purplish at the base, and branched near the top.

Roots: A shallow taproot with a crown and fibrous roots.

Smell: Leaves have a strong, distinct, unpleasant odor.



Control

Herbicide Control: Spray rosettes in autumn or winter for best results. Use 2,4-D or MCPA for seedling control, or Metsulfuron-methyl and Picloram/Triclopyr for established, multi-crown plants. Ensure full coverage, but avoid spraying flowering plants as they often survive, requiring stronger, residual herbicides.

Physical/Manual Removal: Dig out (grub) or hand-pull, ensuring the entire crown and root system (at least 5cm of root) are removed to prevent regrowth. This is most effective in spring before flowering.

Biological Control: The ragwort flea beetle (*Longitarsus jacobaeae*) and cinnabar moth larvae are effective biocontrol agents that feed on root crowns and leaves.

Disposal: Burn or deeply bury pulled plants, as they can continue to seed even when out of the ground.

