

English Daisy *Bellis perennis L.*



The English daisy has pretty white, pinkish to red petals and a big yellow disk-shaped center. Who would guess that under all this beauty lurks a very common turf/lawn weed that can also be found growing in fields and along roadsides!

The English daisy, Lawn daisy, or European daisy is a perennial that originally came from Europe as a garden plant. This plant may be where the word “daisy” originated. It means “day’s eye” and comes from Anglo-Saxon “*daeges ege*”. The English daisy folds up its petals at night and opens them again at dawn---the “eye of the day”. The scientific name is derived from Latin *bellus*, meaning pretty or charming.

This daisy has a prostrate or spreading growth habit that likes the moist, cool soils west of the Cascade Mountains. It also likes the high rainfall areas east of the Cascades and usually grows in soil that is low in fertility. As far as daisies go it is pretty diminutive, having only 3-4 inch flower stalks that are usually longer than the leaves. These stems are leafless and support a single flower. The spring blooming flowers are only about an inch, having the typical daisy shape with many narrow rays/petals attached to a yellow center that grows from the basal rosette of leaves. The 1½-inch leaves can be either smooth or hairy textured and may or may not have teeth. The leaves are usually wider at the tips and become narrower towards the base. The English daisy primarily reproduces by seed. It is not considered a spreading plant, but can be propagated by division of the plant clumps.

There is a double form of this plant that is grown as a garden plant, but the single form of this plant has become a very serious lawn problem here in the Northwest as well as in the northeastern states and southward.

The English daisy can be cultivated out of a lawn by digging up the rosettes. Do this when the soil is loose so you can get as much of the taproot as possible. Rototilling or hoeing is also an effective means of controlling this plant, but it can also bring undesirable weed seeds to the surface, promoting seed germination. A good lawn fertilizer program will keep the English daisy in check because it likes soils that are low in fertility and a healthy lawn will out-compete this weed.



Multiple herbicide applications are recommended. A post-emergent application when the plant is actively growing in the seedling to flower stage of growth is recommended before July 1st. A second herbicidal application around September 15th will control regrowth and prevent late weeds from growing. Remember to read and follow all label instructions before application.

There is a common proverb associated with this flower and its abundance in spring and early summer: “When you can put your foot on *seven* daisies.....summer is come.”

Resources:

Hortsense—<http://pep.wsu.edu/Hortsense>

Weeds of the West

WSU publication #EB0607, Lawn Weed Control For Homeowners

weedalert.com http://www.weedalert.com/weed_pages/wa_english_daisy.htm