

## Oxeye Daisy

*Crysanthemum leucanthemum* L.  
*Leucanthemum vulgare* Lam.



Oxeye Daisy is another “Ornamental Gone Wild” and is a Spokane County Noxious Weed Board Class B Designate noxious weed. Oxeye Daisy should not be confused with the 2003 Perennial Plant of the Year, *Leucanthemum* ‘Becky’, which is a garden ornamental plant that can only be propagated by stem cutting, tissue culture or division.

This plant and its seeds are prohibited for sale or distribution in the State of Washington, but it is sometimes sold as an ornamental. On seed packets the plant name is often listed as *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, which is synonymous with *Leucanthemum vulgare*. Several sites on the internet list Oxeye Daisy seeds for sale, both as a plant and a wildflower, so be careful that any wildflower mix you purchase does not contain its seeds.

This perennial plant was originally a native of Eurasia, where it was both loved and hated. It was a big problem in pastures and crop fields across Europe. The Scots called the flowers “gools” and the farmer with the most “gools” in their wheat field had to pay an extra tax. Now the “gools” have invaded this continent from coast to coast. It can be found in every state in the U.S. but is less common in the south. It was introduced to the Pacific Northwest in the late 1800s, probably as a contaminant of forage grass and legume seed. By 1937 it had spread to half the counties in the region. Today it is found throughout the State of Washington, but is most abundant in the southwestern and northeastern portion of the state. You will find this weed in native grasslands, overgrazed pastures, waste areas, meadows, railroad right-of-ways, and roadsides in a wide range of soils, particularly in those soils low in pH and nutrients.

This is a very beautiful plant with its showy white flowers borne atop 1 to 3-foot stems. The stem arises from the upturned rhizomes or buds found on the root crown and can be hairless to slightly hairy. Stems at the base of the plant grow flat along the ground and can root. Other stems grow upright and can be simple to slightly branched. The toothed, spatula-shaped to round basal leaves occur on long stalks. The stem leaves are alternate and lack stalks. These leaves are generally lance-shaped with coarse teeth and often have a few lobes at the base. Each flower head is composed of numerous bright yellow disk flowers encircled by 20 to 30 white ray flowers that appear as a fringe around this disk.



Oxeye Daisy usually begins blooming in its second year and flowers between June to August. Flowering can be delayed if plants are growing under competitive conditions. It spreads vegetatively, so it is rarely found as a single plant except when newly established from seed. Seeds are dispersed from August to September. Plants normally produce 1,300 to 4,000 seeds, but a vigorous plant may produce up to 26,000 seeds. Seeds are dispersed by the wind and can remain viable for long periods, but they normally germinate in the year they are produced or the following spring with a 90 to 95% germination rate. Seeds germinate rapidly on bare soil.

Oxeye Daisy leaves and flowers are edible. This daisy is mildly aromatic and reputedly has some medicinal purposes when used as a tea that is brewed from the whole plant. It can give milk an off-flavor if animals consume it. Horses, sheep, and goats will eat it, but cows and pigs will avoid it.

Because of its shallow root system, Oxeye Daisy is easily killed by repetitive cultivations. Mowing before the first flowers open can eliminate seed production, but can stimulate shoot production. Daisies are resistant to many herbicides. Some weed/chemical control recommendations by the Spokane County Noxious Weed Board include 2,4-D in May thru June during the rosette/seedling stage of growth and picloram plus 2,4-D in July during the bolting, bud, bloom stage of growth. Always read and follow the label directions when applying herbicides.

There have not been any effective biocontrol insects or pathogens found for this daisy. One of the reasons for this is that the Oxeye Daisy contains polyacetylenes and thiophenes that are highly toxic to some insects.

#### Resources:

Spokane County Noxious Weed Control Board <http://www.spokanecounty.org/weedboard>

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov>

Wildflowers & Weeds <http://www.wildflowers-and-weeds.com>

Weeds of the West