

PRICKLY LETTUCE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Lactuca serriola*

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? It is an annual weed growing from 1 to 5' in height. The leaves are alternate and prickly on the lower side of the midrib. The plant is sometimes called the compass plant, because the leaves on the main stem are held vertically in a north-south plane, perpendicular to direct sunlight. All parts of the plants emit a milky sap when cut.

WHERE DOES IT LIKE TO GROW? Prickly lettuce commonly grows in waste areas, gardens, irrigated crops, along road sides, and is a prolific colonizer of disturbed habitats.



WHEN DOES IT BLOOM? The flowers produced in late spring to early summer are yellow in color and approximately one third of an inch in diameter.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD? It spreads only by seed. Individual plants can produce from 35 to 2,300 flowers, with each flower head containing an average of 20 seeds. Most seeds are viable and ready to germinate immediately after dispersal. Prickly lettuce forms only a short-term seed bank, with seeds surviving 1-3 years in the soil.

HOW DO I CONTROL IT? Prickly lettuce should be controlled before it flowers. Regular monitoring and removal of plants from the site will prevent seeds from developing and accumulating in the soil. It does have herbicide resistance issues plus it is a late germinating weed that comes after commonly used herbicides have broken down.

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Learn to identify plants; start monitoring early in the season.
- Hand-pulling is effective for small infestations, if it is done when the ground is moist.
- Seedlings and rosettes are easily controlled by cultivation.
- Sheep and goats enjoy feeding on prickly lettuce and will devour whole fields of this weed.

CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Plants are difficult to control with herbicides once the flowering stems have begun to elongate and it is resistant to Group B herbicides. Be certain you **read all the label instructions and follow them carefully.**



Want more information? Contact:

Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control

10905 N. Ramsey Road

Hayden, ID 83835

208-446-1290 / TTY 208-446-2145

kcnoxiousweeds@kcgov.us or www.kcweeds.com

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