



RED SORREL

BOTANICAL NAME: *Rumex acetosella*

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? Red sorrel is a perennial weed with distinctive arrowhead-shaped leaves and red flowering stems. The erect stems can grow 1 to 2 feet tall. Both the stems and leaves have a bitter taste, resembling rhubarb. Native Americans used sorrel as an antidote for poison. Common names include: sheep sorrel, horse sorrel, cow sorrel, field sorrel or sour dock.

WHERE DOES IT LIKE TO GROW? Red sorrel grows in a wide range of soil types, including sandy loam, sand, silt and gravel. It thrives on acid soils with low fertility but is adapted to other soil conditions. It is a weed of disturbed sites, such as roadsides, abandoned fields, gardens, lawns and pastures.

WHEN DOES IT BLOOM? Male and female flowers are produced on different plants, which bear the flowers in branched clusters at the top of the plant. Yellow-orange male flowers produce large quantities of pollen. Red-orange female flowers bloom from May to September producing small, three-angled mahogany seeds.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD? Red sorrel is a shallow rooted, creeping perennial that reproduces by seed and by shallow horizontal roots with whitish buds from which new plants start.

TOXICITY: Red sorrel contains oxalic acid, which can poison livestock if consumed in large quantities; the seeds are said to be poisonous to horses and sheep.

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Remove small patches of red sorrel from gardens and flower beds by aggressively digging with a shovel or spading fork to expose and remove the roots.
- Tilling or cultivation will only break and spread the root system. A piece of root as small as ½ inch can start a new infestation.
- Applying lime and nitrogen fertilizer will increase the soil PH and encourage desirable plants to grow and may reduce red sorrel infestation.



CHEMICAL CONTROL: Several herbicides are labeled for use in pastures and lawns. Herbicides are most effective on new growth which usually occurs late fall or very early spring. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Office for herbicide recommendations.

NOTE: These plants are not considered noxious in the State of Idaho or in Kootenai County

Want more information or herbicide suggestions? Contact:

Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control
10905 N. Ramsey Road
Hayden, ID 83835

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

kcnoxioussweeds@kcgov.us or www.kcweeds.com

Kootenai County does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment in, its public meetings, programs, or activities. Requests for assistance or accommodations can be arranged by contacting the Noxious Weed Control Department at (208) 446-1290 or County Administration Office TTY (208)446-2145 with 3 days advance notice.