

RUSH SKELETONWEED *(Chondrilla juncea L.)*

INTRODUCTION

Rush skeletonweed, also known as, gum succory, devil's-grass, naked weed or hog-bite, is a member of the *Asteraceae* (Sunflower) family. It was introduced from southern Europe and has since spread to occupy over five million acres in the western United States.

In BC, rush skeletonweed was first identified in the North Okanagan region of Spallumcheen in 1983. Subsequent infestations have been found in Crescent Valley, Kimberley, Windermere and Creston. It is currently not known to occur within the south Okanagan or Similkameen Valleys.

Rush skeletonweed is adapted to a wide range of conditions, particularly dry grasslands with well-drained, light-textured soils. It readily invades rangelands, roadsides and disturbed habitats. Its extensive, long-lived root system enables plants to effectively compete with crops, however, dense monocultures will typically not form in healthy native plant communities. Plants are particularly troublesome in croplands, where the plant's milky latex can hamper harvest and tillage operations.

There are three forms of rush skeletonweed in the US. It has not been clearly established whether all three forms exist in BC.

REPORT INFESTATIONS

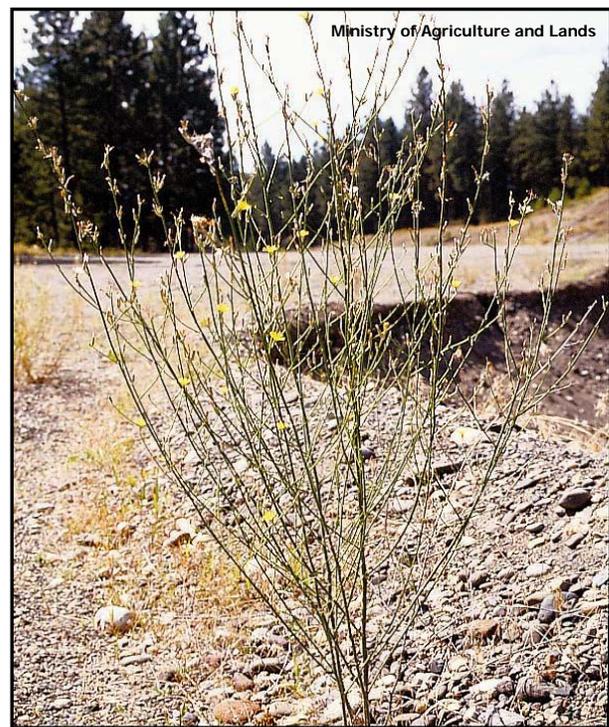
Contact the RDOS Invasive Plant Program
Coordinator at 250-492-0237 or
Toll Free at 1-877-610-3737

IDENTIFICATION

- Heavily branched perennial; grows to 1.3 m tall
- Deep taproot, up to 2.5 m in the soil with one or more lateral roots in the upper 2 feet of soil
- Several branched wiry stems with stiff hairs
- Stems contain a milky juice
- Leaves are small, giving the plant a 'skeleton-like' appearance
- Small yellow flowers occur at the ends of stems, either individually or in groups of 2-3
- Seeds are nearly black and have a white pappus

BIOLOGY

Rush skeletonweed reproduces by seed and vegetatively from roots. A single plant may produce as many as 15,000-20,000 seeds. Seeds are easily dispersed by wind, water, animals and humans.



INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

The most effective method of control for rush skeletonweed is to prevent establishment through proper land management. The healthier the natural plant community, the less susceptible it will be to skeletonweed infestation. Integrated management requires a combination of prevention, physical control and biological control. Monitor your property annually for infestations of rush skeletonweed. If plants are identified, report and control the infestation immediately.

PREVENTION

- Maintain grasslands in a healthy, vigorous condition to ensure a productive plant community; competitive perennial plants utilize water and nutrients that would otherwise be readily available to rush skeletonweed.
- Regularly patrol your property for rush skeletonweed and take action immediately if skeletonweed plants are identified.
- Report any skeletonweed plants to the RDOS Invasive Plant Program Coordinator.
- Immediately re-vegetate disturbed soils with a suitable grass seed mixture that provides dense, early colonization to prevent weed invasion.
- Check seed for contaminants and use only certified seed.

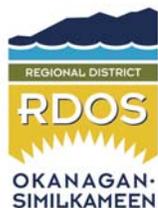
PHYSICAL CONTROL

Small, isolated infestations of rush skeletonweed may be hand pulled, however repeat treatments will likely be required because of the plant's extensive root system. The entire root of the plant should be removed to avoid regrowth. Pulling should occur before seed production, otherwise seed heads should be cut and bagged. Mowing and cultivation are ineffective at controlling rush skeletonweed.

For further information on invasive plants in BC check out the website: www.weedsbc.ca For more information about the Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Program please call 250-492-0237 or toll free at 1-877-610-3737. Information is also available on our website at: www.rdos.bc.ca

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Two biological control agents, *Aceria chondrillae* (gall mite) and *Puccinia chondrillina* (stem and leaf rust) have been released in BC. Both agents have shown varying success. Selective grazing with sheep has also shown to control rush skeletonweed if the weed is grazed at a moderate level and desirable plants are only grazed lightly.



Produced by the Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen

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