

# Perennial Sowthistle



*Perennial sow-thistle seed germinates when the soil has warmed in the spring. Seeds are reddish-brown, ridged, and wrinkled with a tuft of fine white hairs. When broken, both the leaves and stem exude a milky latex. All plant parts are filled with a bitter, milky juice. The seedling grows slowly for about two weeks until the leaves are about 3 cm long and then forms a rosette. First year rosettes form vertical roots up to 2 m deep, produce vegetative buds from depths up to 50 cm and horizontal roots with a spread of 60-100 cm. The roots are mycorrhiza<sup>17</sup>. Bolting usually occurs in the second year when the rosette has 12-15 leaves. Alternate, lower leaves are deeply lobed, upper leaves clasp the stem; similar to dandelion leaves except with teeth ending in small weak prickles. Root pieces, that may have been cut during cultivation, as small as 1 cm can produce a flowering plant within a year. Widely spreading white brittle roots penetrating five to ten feet, producing new plants from small root pieces. Flowers are bright yellow up to 2" wide daisies, blooming from June through August. Sowthistle spreads vegetatively, as well as through wind-born seeds and it colonizes in cultivated fields, pastures, woodlands, roadsides and gardens. It is not considered a serious threat to intact native plant communities, but is common throughout the U.S.*



**Mechanical Control:** *Cutting and pulling. Tillage implements that can work and bury the root fragments below 30 cm or leave them on the soil surface to dry out may reduce infestations. Repeated cultivation is needed for most infestations. Grazing and repeated cultivation can help reduce perennial sowthistle stands by depleting root energy reserves. Cultivation is most effective when young shoots are at the 6-leaf rosette stage.*

**Chemical Control:** *Various broadleaf herbicides can be effective in pasture or range settings. Roundup can help in managing infestations in annual cropping scenarios. Consult the District for specific recommendations.*

**Biological control:** *there are no known bio-agents available at this time.*

**Distribution and impact:** *there are infestations of Perennial sowthistle in Johnson County, however they don't seem to be causing a major impact to producers.*