

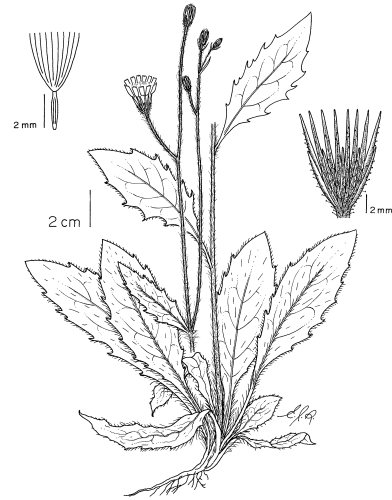
Common Hawkweed

Hieracium lachenalii

ALBERTA REGULATORY STATUS:
WEED CONTROL ACT
PROHIBITED NOXIOUS
Last Updated: May 2026



BC Ministry of Forests, Key to Identification of Invasive and Native Hawkweeds in the Pacific Northwest



Illustrated Flora of British Columbia Volumes 1-8, eds. G.W. Douglas; Straley, G.B.; Meidinger, D.V.; Pojar, J. 1998-2002. Copyright Province of British Columbia. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission of the Province of British Columbia

Overview:

Common hawkweed is a member of the Aster family and is native to Europe. It is a fibrous-rooted, perennial herb with milky latex in the stems and leaves. Invasive hawkweeds were first found in Western Canada as recently as 50-years ago.¹ Common hawkweed is not known to be present in Alberta. Recent taxonomic revisions have divided hawkweeds into two genera: *Pilosella* and *Hieracium*.¹ In Alberta, invasive hawkweeds belong to the genus *Pilosella*, while *Hieracium* includes both native and invasive species.¹ *Hieracium* hawkweed species do not have stolons (runners) but do have stem leaves in contrast to the *Pilosella* hawkweed species. Invasive *Hieracium* species reproduce both by seed and vegetatively through short underground stems (rhizomes), and occasional regrowth from root fragments.¹ Plants produce yellow, dandelion-like flower heads that mature into fluffy, wind-dispersed seeds. Most invasive hawkweeds produce viable seed without pollination, meaning a single plant can start a new infestation.¹

While sexual reproduction is possible, it is not the primary mode of reproduction; hybridization between species is believed to occur.¹ Flower heads may continue to mature viable seed even after plants have been pulled. Seed longevity is unknown but seeds from *Pilosella* species can remain viable in the soil for up to seven years.²

Habitat:

Prefers to grow in dry to moderately moist places such as roadsides, gravel riverbeds, forest openings, and other disturbed or waste areas in lowland and mountain regions.^{1,3}

Identification:

Stems: Erect and often solitary, with few star-shaped hairs* and many glandular hairs. Plants grow 20-80cm tall and they do not have stolons.¹

Leaves: Basal leaves are grey-green, broad to long and narrow with noticeable teeth, narrowing toward the base; 4-7 leaves on the stem, with smaller leaves higher up.¹

Flowers: 4-12 yellow flower heads; covered in many star-shaped* and long

hairs, sometimes with a few dark gland-tipped hairs.¹

Seeds: pappus (tuft of hair on the seed) is dull white to tawny, 2.5-3.5mm long.³
*These features are best observed with a hand lens.

Toxicity: Unknown.

Lookalike Species: May be confused with other native and introduced species in the genus *Hieracium*. Some invasive species in the genus *Pilosella* also appear similar, particularly when not in full flower. Native and introduced hawkbeard species (*Crepis*) may resemble hawkweeds due to their yellow, dandelion-like flower heads, but they differ in leaf shape and other structural characteristics.

Impacts:

Hawkweeds' rapid growth and ability to exploit disturbed ground allow them to spread quickly and dominate sites. Even small, easily overlooked patches can develop into persistent infestations that are difficult to control. Dense mats can form, displacing native vegetation and overtaking yards, gardens, and natural areas, underscoring the importance of

Common Hawkweed *(continued)*

Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR). In British Columbia, invasive hawkweeds were projected to cause up to \$60 million per year in economic damages by 2020 if left unmanaged, driven by impacts to forage production, biodiversity, recreation, and human health.⁴

Prevention:

Reduce the risk of establishment by maintaining healthy, competitive plant communities and regular monitoring of high-risk areas, including properly identifying unknown plant species before they spread. Prevent introduction and movement by working from clean sites to infested sites, cleaning equipment and gear between locations, and minimizing soil disturbance. Use weed-free products where available, avoid generic wildflower seed mixes, and obtain seed certificates for large-scale seeding to assess for potential contaminants.

Control:

Effective control of invasive hawkweeds requires repeated treatment and ongoing monitoring, using an integrated approach to address both aggressive vegetative spread and seed production. Plants should be treated before flowering to prevent seed production. If flowers or buds are present, they should be removed and properly disposed of to prevent viable seed development. Root systems must be fully removed or effectively controlled to prevent regrowth from fragments. Pulled material must be bagged and disposed of in a landfill or incinerated, as plants can continue to produce viable seed after removal. Maintaining healthy, competitive vegetation helps reduce reinfestation, while regular monitoring is essential to detect regrowth and new seedlings from the seed bank. Cleaning equipment is also important to prevent the spread of seeds and root fragments.

Grazing: Can be an effective IPM tool in some contexts; however, significant knowledge gaps remain regarding the response of specific invasive plants to

grazing, including appropriate stocking rates, palatability, and potential toxicity to livestock. For hawkweeds, including common hawkweed, there is currently insufficient information to recommend targeted grazing as a management approach.⁶

Mechanical: Mowing before flowering will prevent seed production of taller plants but will not inhibit reproduction via rhizomes. Hand digging of small infestations, ensuring all roots are removed, may be effective. Root fragments can generate new plants; therefore, any mechanical tilling/cultivation is not recommended. If manually removed while flowering, invasive hawkweeds can still go to seed, so timing and disposal are important considerations to prevent seed dispersal.

Cultural: Long-term management of hawkweeds requires maintaining healthy plant communities. Fertilizing and seeding desirable vegetation can help outcompete hawkweeds.¹ Use caution when sourcing seed, requesting a certificate of seed can help reduce risk of contamination.

Chemical: Registered herbicides for managing hawkweeds in Canada may include products containing active ingredients such as 2,4-D, acetic acid, aminopyralid, aminocyclopyrachlor, chlorsulfuron, dicamba, florypyrauxifen, glyphosate, hexazinone, MCPA, metsulfuronmethyl, pelargonic acid, and picloram.⁶ Some herbicide products list specific hawkweed species on their labels, always check the product label to confirm that the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date specifically for *Hieracium lachenalii*.⁷

REFERENCES:

1. Wilson, L., S. Turner, S. Cesselli, C. Moffat, and D. Ensing. 2021. Key to identification of invasive and native hawkweeds in the Pacific Northwest. Fourth revision. B.C. Ministry of Forests, Range Branch, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada.
2. Moffat, C.E., De Clerck-Floate, R.A., J. Littlefield, and G. Cortat. 2023. Hawkweeds (*Pilosella* spp.): History and Ecology in North America. In: R.L. Winston, Ed. Biological Control of Weeds in North America. North American Invasive Species Management Association, Milwaukee, WI. NAISMA-BCW-2023-36HAWKWEEDS-P.
3. Douglas, George W., Del Meidinger, and Jim Pojar, eds. The Illustrated Flora of British Columbia. 8 vols. Victoria: BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks; BC Ministry of Forests, 1998–2002.
4. Frid, L., D. Knowler, C. Murray, J. Myers, and L. Scott. 2009. Economic impacts of invasive plants in British Columbia. Prepared for the Invasive Plant Council of British Columbia by ESSA Technologies Ltd., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
5. Michalsky, S., M. Neville, and A. J. Miller. 2022. Targeted grazing: plant and animal interactions. Paskwa Consultants Ltd., Gramineae Services Ltd., and Palouse Rangeland Consulting. Prepared for the Grassland Restoration Forum.
6. Alberta Grains. 2025. Crop protection guide 2025. Alberta Grains, Alberta, Canada.
7. De Clerck-Floate, R. A., G. Cortat, S. C. Turner, and C. E. Moffat. 2024. *Pilosella* spp., hawkweeds / piloselles (*Asteraceae*). Pages 543–558 in M. A. Vankosky and V. Martel, editors. Biological control programmes in Canada, 2013–2023. CABI.