

Nursery Common Weed Identification Sheet

Whether your nursery is large or small, being able to identify, understand, and control weeds is important to your plants and your profits. To help you identify and understand some of the toughest weeds, we called in expert James Altland, a nursery plant specialist from Oregon State University. For weed control and beautifully strong plants, you need something tried and true. Both Barricade® (the longest-lasting pre-emergence herbicide on the market) and Reward® (a works-in-hours, non-selective post-emergence herbicide) are designed to control and eliminate weeds.

● Bittercress (*Cardamine flexuosa* or *C. oligosperma*)

Bittercress is problematic throughout North America. It is a winter annual that is very common in overwintering structures. It has green and deeply lobed foliage. It grows in individual clumps one to several inches tall and wide.

Bittercress reproduces by seed and typically germinates in the cooler seasons of fall and winter, but can germinate year-round in container nurseries. Bittercress can disseminate seed up to three feet from the mother plant, thus sanitation in and around containers is crucial.

Bittercress is most problematic from fall through early spring. Pre-emergence herbicides applied prior to overwintering will prevent severe infestations.



● Creeping woodsorrel (*Oxalis corniculata*)

Creeping woodsorrel is a perennial weed common throughout the U.S. It has distinctive “clover-like” foliage with green to purple color and small yellow flowers consisting of five petals that are produced on slender stalks throughout most of the year. It can grow several inches high, and generally spreads across the container in small clumps.

Creeping woodsorrel reproduces by seed and spreading stolons. Seed pods, which resemble a miniature okra, contain numerous seeds that are forcefully ejected up to several feet away, enabling the creeping woodsorrel to spread throughout the container system quickly.

Creeping woodsorrel also spreads via nursery liners. When infested liners are potted-up into containers, pre-emergence herbicides are largely ineffective in controlling creeping woodsorrel regeneration from root and stolon fragments.



● Prostrate spurge (*Chamaesyce maculata*)

Prostrate spurge is a summer annual. Similar to other plants in the family *Euphorbiaceae*, stems exude a milky sap when severed. Prostrate spurge grows low along the ground or substrate surface, forming a dense mat.

Its small, dark green, oval leaves contain a red spot in the center. Numerous small inconspicuous pink flowers are formed in clusters along the stem, enabling the plant to be a prolific seed producer. Seed germinates within five days after release from the mother plant, and matures in just four weeks.

Pre-emergence herbicides must be applied prior to spurge germination. Because of rapid germination, herbicides should be applied soon after potting. Sanitation is important: do not allow this weed to grow beneath or around containers.



● Common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*)

Common groundsel is an annual that germinates year-round, but is most prolific during the cool fall and spring seasons. In full sunlight, it can grow up to two feet in height. Leaves tend to be deeply indented and are attached directly to the stem. The yellow flower clusters are surrounded by green bracts with black tips, which help distinguish this plant from others in the *Asteraceae* family.

Seeds are attached to a cotton-like pappus, allowing them to drift long distances with wind. Because seeds are readily dispersed by wind, just a few plants surrounding the nursery can infest the entire container operation. Sanitation in and around the nursery site will greatly reduce common groundsel populations in containers.

This is one of the few weed species that readily infests field and container sites alike.



● **Common chickweed (*Stellaria media*)**

Common chickweed generally germinates around November and matures by March or April. The stems and petioles are pubescent, though foliage generally is not. Hairs along the stem are unique, in that they occur in one or two straight lines. Common chickweed stems root at internodes. Brittle stems of this plant, along with roots formed at multiple points along the stem, make handweeding very difficult. Flowers may appear to have 10 petals, however, close examination reveals that there are only five deeply lobed petals.

Sanitation in and around the production area is important. This species is prolific in field soils. When potting field-grown nursery stock into containers, be sure plant material is not infested with chickweed. Pre-emergence herbicides containing oxadiazon are notably ineffective in controlling this species.



● **Northern willowherb (*Epilobium ciliatum*)**

This weed is prevalent along the West Coast, Upper Midwest, and Northeast U.S. It is less common in warmer areas of the South and Southeast U.S. It grows upright and overshadows most container shrubs. It has pink flowers, which mature into long, cigar-shaped seed pods.

Seed are attached to a tuft of hairs which aids in wind dispersal. Seeds germinate in as little as four days after landing in containers. Similar to common groundsel, this plant must be aggressively controlled in non-crop areas. Glyphosate provides effective post-emergence control. This plant is a perennial, so handweeding must be thorough.



● **Pearlwort (*Sagina procumbens*)**

Pearlwort is a diminutive weed, growing slowly and prostrate along the substrate surface. It is most common in cooler regions of the Pacific Northwest and Northeast U.S.

Pearlwort seed spread by splashing, in which water drops falling on mature fruit pods “splash” seed up to 30 inches from the mother plant.

Pearlwort often infests nursery liners. While liners may appear weed-free, roots of pearlwort may infest the substrate. This is a common route of entry for pearlwort into nursery containers. Check liners to be sure they are weed-free prior to potting. Once established, pearlwort is difficult to thoroughly remove from the container.



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- 30+ weeds, including crabgrass, chickweed, and spurge
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- Non-staining formula
- Low solubility and volatility



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