

Yellow Nutsedge

Yellow Nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*), a class B-designate noxious weed in Franklin County, Wash. is of the Cyperaceae (Sedge) family. It is required to control Yellow nutsedge in Franklin County.

Yellow nutsedge is considered one of the world's worst weeds, it is highly adaptable to irrigated agricultural areas. It competes with crops for water, light and nutrients, reducing yield. There has been research to suggestion that this species may produce chemicals that are toxic to crops. The root system, which is made up of tubers, can produce hundreds to thousands of tubers in a season per plant; the tubers can survive 3 to 4 years.

Yellow nutsedge favors low, moist areas and forms dense colonies. Habitats include:

pastures, flood plains, dams, ditches, stream banks, roadsides, wet fields, wet prairies, and around lakes and ponds. The plant is also troublesome in crops like potatoes, beans and corn where it reduces crop yield and quality by competing for light, water, and nutrients. Yellow nutsedge is a serious invader and is not controlled by common grass herbicides.

The key to effective control of Yellow nutsedge is not allowing the plant to form its tubers. Once the tubers are formed it becomes extremely difficult to control, even with herbicides. Hand pulling plants when they first appear, helps deplete the carbohydrates that supply the tubers growth. Herbicide treatments are an option if used when plants are young, generally in the spring.



Key identifying traits



- Leaves are narrow and grass-like. Three vertical rows on the stem, with most of the leaves clustered at the base of the stem.
- Flowers are yellowish or yellowish-brown, arranged in narrow spikelets on umbel-like inflorescences.
- Stems are erect, triangular and yellow-green.
- Tubers are small and nutlike.



Yellow nutsedge plants are easy to spot when in bloom.

Biology and ecology

- A fibrous rooted perennial, that grows 12– 32 inches tall.
- Yellow nutsedge grows from tuber-bearing roots stocks.
- Tubers are approximately 2/5 to 4/5 of an inch long.
- Tubers can survive 3-4 years.
- Yellow nutsedge can produce hundreds of thousands of tubers each year per plant.



Plants begin producing tubers when relatively young.

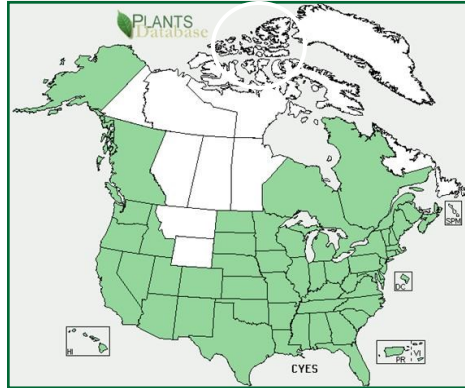
Though Yellow nutsedge does produce seed, its main form of reproduction is its tubers.



Yellow nutsedge tubers are small and have a nutty taste.



Yellow nutsedge can grow from 12 to 32 inches tall.



The distribution of Yellow nutsedge in Canada and the U.S.



Yellow nutsedge spreads through tubers and rhizomes.

Control Measures

- **Biological:** Currently, there are no bio-control agents available for Yellow nutsedge.
- **Cultivation:** Repeated cultivation of small areas before the plants have 6 leaves will reduce populations.
- **Mowing:** Ineffective due to underground tubers being the main mode of reproduction.
- **Drying:** During the middle of summer, you can control yellow nutsedge by cultivating the infested area and then withholding all moisture to allow the sun to dry the tubers. Repeated tilling and drying are required to give good control. This method is effective only in areas where other plants don't need irrigation. Drying isn't effective for controlling yellow nutsedge.
- **Tillage:** every three weeks throughout the season can reduce viability by 80% because tubers are exposed to prolonged drying on the soil surface.
- **Chemical:** The only nonselective postemergent herbicide currently available to help control nutsedge in the home

landscape is glyphosate (e.g. Roundup) or glyphosate with nonaolic acid (Roundup Plus). This herbicide requires repeated applications, and its use will result only in limited suppression of these weeds. When tubers are mature the herbicide usually doesn't move from the leaves to the tubers, leaving them unaffected. Instead, apply glyphosate when the plants are young, actively growing, and haven't recently been mowed or cut.

There are selective herbicides available for the homeowner that are said to control or suppress nutsedge. These products can be found at nurseries and garden stores that sell herbicides.

Agriculturally a number of herbicides are available for suppression and control of Yellow nutsedge. Due to crop and location variations refer to the current *Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook* or contact your local herbicide representative for recommendations.

- **Always read the label instructions before applying any herbicides for proper rate and timing. Use chemicals that are compatible with your goals.**

Prevention

Yellow nutsedge should be prevented from spreading into new areas. Since soil clumps containing tubers, rhizomes, and seeds can adhere to tillage and harvest equipment, these should be cleaned of any yellow nutsedge remains before they are used in uninfested fields. Because hay, straw, and crop seed may contain nutsedge seeds or tubers, these commodities should be purchased from a reliable source. Also, avoid spreading manure contaminated with nutsedge into uninfested fields.

To further reduce spreading, spot treat isolated patches of yellow nutsedge in fields and other areas with an effective herbicide. Also, maneuver tillage equipment around isolated nutsedge patches to avoid spreading rhizomes and tubers throughout the field.

For more information see our website @ <http://benton-franklin.wsu.edu/noxious-weeds/index.html>

Photos and information courtesy of : USDA plants database, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board; Colorado Dept. of Agriculture; University of California, Oregon State University; photo's courtesy of : Dan Tenaglia, Missouriplants.com.

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