50 FOR 4-H'ERS/WEEDS
Don't hurry! 

Visit with us on this first page and you will get more from the fifty.

This group of weeds includes all plants now acceptable for 4-H identification. Please do not develop the approach that this group is all the plants that 4-H programs should include. A good 4-H'er, able to identify all of this group, should have added in three or four years of work a minimum of another fifty of the plants common to the area in which he lives.

The word descriptions are as simple as they can be made and remain correct. Measurements are in feet and inches, rather than the normally preferred metric system. Some of the terms are not correct as used; for example, the so-called petals of a daisy are not petals—each is an entire flower of five petals grown together—but as they appear on the composite-type head as the petals of the flower head, we shall use that term in describing them.

Leaf shapes, stem angles, the position of the flower, etc., that show in the accompanying drawings have not been described in the text unless considered peculiar to the individual plant being described.

The emphasis that has been placed on the “habitat” in the description should be carried through when studying these plants. The “habitat type,” as used here, is descriptive of the “preferred home”—the combination of environmental factors (soil type and depth, soil moisture, drainage, saltiness, sun and/or shade, the ability of the plant to fight for space, competitiveness, etc.) permitting the plant to make maximum growth and normal development.

If you learn at the outset that a particular plant is most often found in a recognizable and describable area, you will have mastered the basic principle in understanding plants where they live. Recognizing that plants “do best” in certain “habitats” will explain the differences between individuals of the same type found in different locations.
FIELD HORSETAIL

(Equisetum arvense L.)

Known As: Horsetail rush, scouring-rush, jointgrass, snakegrass

Description: Perennial with annual stems which are hollow and jointed (as the ferrule of a fish pole); plants of two types, vegetative with whorls of leafy material and nearly bare stems with dark sporophyte heads.

Habitat Type: Common on moist sites, below springs, along the banks of old drains, etc.; very competitive, especially on sandy soils.
Common Fern Family

WESTERN BRACKEN

(Pteridium aquilinum L.)

Description: Stout black rootstocks below surface of soil; blades 24 to 48 inches long, 12 to 36 inches wide; short hairs or smooth above and soft hairy below.

Habitat Type: Habitats apt to retain greater than normal moisture for the area; open woods, thickets, meadows and hillsides. Much of the area in fern would, if permitted, return to trees.
SOFTSTEM BULRUSH
(Scirpus validus Vahl)

Known As: Tussocks, tules

Description: Softstem bulrush grows in clumps of round, smooth stems without leaves, 12 to 36 inches tall. Seeds produced in small, brown bracts located on one side of the stem near the top.

Habitat Type: Perennial, native, and very well adapted to wet areas. Common in poorly drained and/or overgrazed non-native pastures west of the Cascades. This plant is indicative of its habitat and is poorly adapted to well-drained sites. Its competitive ability is largely due to the lack of adaptability of most forage plants to the site.
Grass Family

BARNYARDGRASS

*(Echinochloa crusgalli* (L.) Beauv.)

Known As: Watergrass

Description: Prostrate to upright, 2 to 50 inches per stem; heads tight to open and lax, glumes green or white to red or purple with or without awns (1 to 16 mm in length), leaves broad, base of stems red.

Habitat Type: Common in moist areas throughout most of the state; well enough adapted to be weedy in areas of high daytime temperature and more intense sunlight (Columbia Basin and lower Yakima).
Grass Family

DOWNY BROME

(Bromus tectorum L.)

Known As: Cheatgrass

Description: Annual or winter annual, 12 to 24 inches high; leaves and sheaths soft-hairy; empty glumes narrow, unequal, hairy, the first 1-nerved, the second 3-nerved.

Habitat Type: Common on disturbed sites where competition is lacking, especially on dry or coarse soil types. This plant seems best suited to replace bunch grass that is overgrazed in much of our state—arid and semiarid areas.
Grass Family

FOXTAIL BARLEY

(*Hordeum jubatum* L.)

**Description:** A coarse bunchgrass from 6 to 24 inches high. Leaves somewhat alternate on the stem. The leaf color is a grey-green. The heads are 2 to 5 inches long, with spreading, rough awns.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial reproducing by seed, in meadows, irrigated fields, on the edges of ponds, streams, and irrigation ditches and in swampy alkali flats. It begins growing early and often heads in the first cutting of hay.
Quackgrass

(*Agropyron repens* (L.) Beauv.)

**Known As:** Couchgrass

**Description:** Stems erect, 20 to 48 inches tall, from creeping, shallow rootstocks. Leaf blades flat, narrow and tending to be rough on the upper surface. Inflorescence of spikelets (3- to 8-flowered) in two rows on opposite sides of the main stem as a terminal spike.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial reproducing by seeds and creeping underground stems on almost any type site as long as it is sufficiently fertile. Abundant on moist sites, ditchbanks, etc.
Cattail Family

COMMON CATTAILE

(*Typha latifolia* L.)

**Description:** Stout perennials, 3 to 10 feet tall; leaves long and 1/2 to 1 inch wide; flower spikes brown.

**Habitat Type:** Marsh or aquatic plants that are indicative of water in excess, even though on the toe of a well-drained slope, in a road ditch, or many other sites not thought of as marshy.
Lily Family

MEADOW DEATHCAMAS

(Zigadenus venenosus)

Description: Perennial with smooth stem and leaves 8 to 24 inches high from a bulb often 6 to 10 inches under the soil; leaves dark green; flowers white with tinges of yellow or green, 6-parted.

Habitat Type: On stony slopes or coarse soils, often on biscuit mounds in the central plains area of the state; location may be a factor of moisture retention and protected snow cover related to germination requirements.
Buckwheat Family

**CURLY DOCK**

*(Rumex crispus L.)*

**Known As:** Sour dock

**Description:** Perennial to 3-feet high; stems smooth with enlarged nodes; leaves curled along edges and base forming a sheath about the node; flower parts greenish, enlarging with the fruit.

**Habitat Type:** Introduced but well adapted to moist sites that are not saline; does extremely well in irrigated (overgrazed) pastures, sometimes using 25% of the acreage—a nonpaying guest.
Buckwheat Family

PENNSYLVANIA SMARTWEED

(Polygonum pensylvanicum L.)

Description: Leaves sheathing the stem at the base of the leaf; stem with knots or knees at each joint; flowers greenish, white, or pink in thick clusters. Seed three-angled.

Habitat Type: In annual cropland where moisture is plentiful; common along ditches and in other wet areas. May be present as 100 percent cover on recently disturbed areas.
Buckwheat Family

RED SORREL

(Rumex acetosella L.)

Known As: Sheep sorrel

Description: Stems, normally, relatively short to about 12 inches high, usually scattered over a patch being produced from creeping rootstocks. Leaves alternate on stem, simple and very characteristically shaped. Flowers very small, appearing red when mature. Seeds, triangle in shape, very small.

Habitat Type: Perennial, reproducing from seeds and creeping rootstocks on dry sandy and gravelly fields and meadows. Common on infertile sites.
Goosefoot Family

HALOGETON

(*Halogeton glomeratus* C.A. Mey.)

**Description:** Annual with much of the appearance of Russian thistle except that leaves are nearly round, fleshy, and tipped with a bristlelike hair. Plant likely to be lighter in fall, less red, more yellow or beige. Size variable, 1 to 15 inches high.

**Habitat Type:** Arid and semiarid, disturbed areas, normally in the presence of saline soils (alkali conditions); some indications that the plant requires a sodium salt in the soil—not present in most of Washington.
Description: Annual with erect, angular or ridged stems, smooth and tinged with pink or purple; 1 to 7 feet high; leaves grayish green and mealy below; flowers small, greenish, and terminal on stems.

Habitat Type: Common in gardens, cultivated fields and waste areas with disturbed or destroyed native vegetation.
Amaranth Family

REDROOT PIGWEED

(Amaranthus retroflexus L.)

Description: Stems erect, branched above, rough and somewhat hairy. Root reddish or pink above. Leaves alternate, simple, with long petioles. Flowers in thick spikes crowded at the end of the stem.

Habitat Type: An annual, common in fields; one of the most common weeds of gardens, cultivated lands and disturbed places. General throughout the United States. A large pigweed indicates high fertility.
Pink Family

CHICKWEED

(*Stellaria media* (L.) Cyrill.)

**Description:** Annual or biennial; leaves paired, plant weak and spreading; flowers white, single, usually in axil of leaves.

**Habitat Type:** Normal in moist areas that are partly shaded, at least in the central part of the state. Common in weak sections of lawn and in the shade of perennial plantings near the base of buildings.
Buttercup Family

CREEPING BUTTERCUP

(Ranunculus repens L.)

Description: Perennial, with stems creeping, rooting at the nodes, and hairy. Leaves, 3-divided, hairy, dark green, sometimes with light green spots; flowers bright yellow, petals (5 to 7) 1/4- to 1/2-inch long.

Habitat Type: An introduced species that has been common wherever season-long moist situations exist; especially on muck-type soils, on meadows, along ditches, or in lawns.
Buttercup Family

LARKSPUR

(Delphinium species)

Description: Perennial, reproducing by seeds and fleshy or fibrous roots; dependent upon species in question. Leaves few, alternate, palmately lobed into linear segments. Flowers mostly deep blue or, rarely, pale blue or yellowish white.

Habitat Type: Native to the grassland vegetations of our state. Species are found from the arid, sagebrush, central section through the foothill bunchgrasses into the wooded sections with only partial sun on the low-growing plants.
Mustard Family

FIELD PENNYCRESS

(*Thlaspi arvense* L.)

**Known As:** Fanweed, Frenchweed

**Description:** Annual or winter annual; stems smooth, erect, 4 to 20 inches high; leaves simple and toothed on edges; flowers white; seedpods rounded about 3/8 inch in diameter, winged and notched.

**Habitat Type:** Common in gardens, disturbed areas and grain fields; often spread in screenings being used as feed. May be 100 percent cover in idle areas around lots and feed areas.
Mustard Family

HOARY CRESS

(*Cardaria draba* (L.) Desv.)

**Known As:** Whitetop

**Description:** Perennial, reproducing from seeds, rootstocks and creeping roots. Stems erect or spreading, 1 to 2 feet high, branched, normally hairy. Leaves simple with dentate (toothed) edges; the upper ones clasping the stem. Flowers in clusters, petals white, seedpods heart-shaped and somewhat inflated.

**Habitat Type:** Cultivated fields, meadows, grain fields, disturbed places, normally in areas more moist than the surrounding area; tolerant to salt, provided that the soil is moist.
Mustard Family

TUMBLE MUSTARD

(*Sisymbrium altissimum* L.)

Known As: Jim Hill mustard

Description: Annual or winter annual with pale green stems covered with simple hairs, stem growth 3 to 6 feet high; flowers 4-parted, pale yellow; seedpods linear, 2 to 4 inches long.

Habitat Type: Common on disturbed areas; adapted to almost all areas of the state, but most often found in annual crops. Plants mature early ahead of fall-seeded crops.
Description: Stems biennial woody, up to 20 feet long; rooting at the tips under some conditions; leaves 3- to 5-parted with prickles on the ribs; flower number and size variable; petals white; fruit black.

Habitat Type: Common in areas of sufficient moisture and relatively mild winters (west of Cascades and Snake River canyon). A disturbed-area plant (fence-rows, ditchbanks, etc.).
Pea Family

BLACK MEDIC

*(Medicago lupulina L.)*

**Known As:** Yellow trefoil, Japanese clover

**Description:** Annual or winter annual, reproducing by seeds; stems normally on the soil, branched and hairy. Leaves trifoliate, the individual leaflets being wedge-shaped and toothed; the center one on a stalk. Flowers in dense, short spikes; yellow. Seedpods are kidney-shaped, black, and contain but one seed.

**Habitat Type:** Common in fields, gardens, lawns and disturbed places.
Caltrop Family

PUNCTUREVINE

(Tribulus terrestris L.)

Known As: Tackweed

Description: Stems prostrate, branching from the base to form a dense mat of slender, trailing vines from 12 to 80 inches long, hairy. Leaves opposite, pinnate with 4 to 8 pairs of oval leaflets. Flowers in the axils of the leaves, 5-parted, pale yellow. Mature seed pods about 1/4 inch long with 2 to 4 stiff spreading spines up to 1/4 inch long.

Habitat Type: Annual, reproducing by seeds in pastures, along roads, along railroad tracks, in disturbed places and sometimes in cultivated fields. The most common habitat is one that is seemingly too dry for the production of competitive plants.
Mallow Family

COMMON MALLOW

(Malva neglecta Wallr.)

Known As: Cheeseweed, buttonweed

Description: Stems prostrate or near prostrate, spreading from a deep biennial root. Leaves simple, rounded with slightly-lobed edges, 1/4 to 2 inches in diameter. Flowers single or in clusters between the leaves and the stems, five individually notched petals, whitish, or tinged with blue.

Habitat Type: Common in disturbed areas, or areas where insufficient competition is being provided by desirable species.
ST. JOHNSWORT

(Hypericum perforatum L.)

Known As: Goatweed, Klamathweed

Description: Perennial with smooth stems and leaves, dark rings about the nodes; leaves with holes apparent if held to the light; flower petals yellow with dark dots along edges, petals twice as long as green sepals.

Habitat Type: Normally in the sun or, at most, part shade. Common on areas offering little competition from other perennial plants; best on sandy or coarse soil types in eastern Washington. Fall and winter growth adapts it to low rainfall areas.
POISON HEMLOCK

(Conium maculatum L.)

Description: Stems erect, branching, smooth, purple-spotted and ridged, 24 to 60 inches high. Taproot, long, white, often branched. Leaves petioled in threes, toothed and finely cut. Flowers in large open umbels, corolla white.

Habitat Type: Biennial reproducing by seed, on the borders of fields, meadows, roadsides and other disturbed places—primarily on ridged, gravelly or loamy soils.
Description: Stems erect, branching, hollow-jointed, streaked with purple, ridged and smooth, 3 to 6 feet high; roots in a cluster, relatively close to the surface. Veins of individual leaves normally terminating in the notches between the teeth on the edges.

Habitat Type: Perennial, reproducing by seeds and/or fleshy roots in wetland, marshes, meadows and pastures, also along ditches and streams.
SHOWY MILKWEED

(Asclepias speciosa Torr.)

Description: Stems erect, unbranched, with few small, silky hairs, milky sap, 24 to 60 inches tall. Normally occurs in patches resulting from long, creeping rootstocks. Flowers in clusters, purplish with cream to yellow centers. Fruit a characteristic pod with plumed seed.

Habitat Type: Perennial, reproducing by seed and rootstocks in meadow, pastures and disturbed lands, particularly on bottom land or flood areas. May also be found on gravelly, thin soils where competition is light.
FIELD BINDWEED

*(Convolvulus arvensis* L.)*

**Known As:** Morningglory, creeping jenny

**Description:** Perennial reproducing by seeds and rootstocks. Stems on the ground or climbing, 3 to 10 feet long; normally smooth. Leaves simple with long petioles (stems). Either egg-shaped or oblong with somewhat spurred basal lobes. Flowers funnel-shaped, white or pinkish; fruit a round capsule, two to four rough dark seeds.

**Habitat Type:** Almost anywhere—grain fields or disturbed places; on all soil types. This is a very deep-rooted plant.
Dodder Family

DODDER

(Cuscuta L. species)

Description: Annual, from seed but without roots (parasitic); stems twining about host plant, without green coloring, usually yellow or orange; flowers in cluster at leaf (scale) nodes, white and tubular.

Habitat Type: Common in most of our older farming areas, along roadsides, ditches and in fields; species vary widely in the host plants that they parasitize.
Nightshade Family

BLACK NIGHTSHADE

(Solanum nigrum L.)

Description: Annual, 4 to 20 inches tall, free-branched; flowers in clusters of 3 to 10, each as a tube to 1/4 inch long, white- or purple-tinged. The fruit resembles a tomato, 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter.

Habitat Type: Idle areas or commonly as an annual weed in cropland; particularly severe in the central or south-central areas (higher temperatures). Common weed in peas (cut green) and in dry bean fields.
Figwort Family

COMMON MULLEIN

(Verbascum thapsus L.)

Description: Stems erect, very stout, 20 to 100 inches high, simple or with a few upright branches near the top. Wooly throughout, and angular and winged by the continuation of the leaf bases on the stems. Flowers perfect, without stems, calyx five-lobed and very wooly; flower to 1/4 inch in diameter, round, lobed and sulfur yellow.

Habitat Type: Common in pastures, meadows, old fields and disturbed areas, mostly on dry, gravelly or stony soils.
Figwort Family

Dalmatian Toadflax

(*Linaria dalmatica* (L.) Mill.)

**Description:** Perennial with apparently two types of growth: prostrate, soft-appearing, fall growth and erect spring growth 12 to 50 inches high; leaves smooth, pale green, clasping at the base; flower 1/2 to 1 inch long not including the spur, light yellow, slightly darker, and hairy in the throat.

**Habitat Type:** Escaped ornamental, well-adapted to gravelly and coarse sandy soils of eastern and east-central Washington. Highly competitive, probably for moisture.
Figwort Family

**YELLOW TOADFLAX**

*(Linaria vulgaris Hill)*

**Known As:** Butter and eggs, wild snapdragon

**Description:** Perennial reproducing primarily by seeds and some by creeping rootstocks; stems erect with some branching, smooth, 12 to 24 inches tall, generally in clumps. Leaves simple and pale green. Flowers irregular in shape with a spurred lower petal; yellow with an orange throat.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial, sometimes on cultivated land, grain fields or in declining pastures; primarily on gravelly and sandy soils where there is little competition from other plants.
BROADLEAF PLANTAIN  
(Plantago major L.)

**Description:** Perennial, somewhat fine—hairy to smooth; leaves thick, 2 to 15 inches long, with smooth or toothed edges.

**Habitat Type:** On moist sites throughout most of North America, especially where competition from other plants is low due to too much moisture, too low a nutritional level, etc. Competes with dandelion for space in thin, weak turf areas.
Sunflower Family

BIG SAGEBRUSH

(*Artemisia tridentata* Nutt.)

**Description:** Stems woody, much branched, 3 to 9 feet high; leaves alternate, simple and wedge-shaped with 3 to 5 blunt teeth at the end, silvery-grey and aromatic scented.

**Habitat Type:** Shrubby perennial reproducing by seeds on the high plains and the slopes of the foothills and lower mountains. Widespread throughout the arid and semiarid areas of our state.
Sunflower Family

BLUE LETTUCE

(Lactuca pulchella DC)

Known As: Circleweed

Description: Perennial, smooth stems, 12 to 40 inches tall; leaves variable in size and shape, but usually pale green; flowers of 18 to 25 florets (blue), bracts around flower often rose to lavender.

Habitat Type: A native plant that persists as a weed on cultivated lands, especially on alkaline flats of eastern Washington. Avoided by grazing animals; may be somewhat poisonous.
Sunflower Family

BULL THISTLE

(Cirsium vulgare (Sari) Tenore)

Description: Biennial, 20 to 60 inches tall; branched above, leafy with spiny wings extending along stem below leaf base; flowers at tips of stalks, rose-purple heads.

Habitat Type: An introduced species that is now common along roadsides and on noncultivated lands. Pastures that are not managed may become solid thistle patches. Thistles are avoided by stock.
Sunflower Family

CANADA THISTLE

(Cirsium arvense Scop.)

Known As: Creeping thistle

Description: Perennial with erect stems, smooth or hairy, 16 to 48 inches high; leaves 1 to 8 inches long, green and smooth (perhaps a little hairy on the bottom) on both sides; flowers rose-purple, lavender or white.

Habitat Type: Common throughout the area; most abundant on moist sites or on fine-textured soils; at least 6 vegetative types have been described; these types may not respond equally to herbicide treatments.
Sunflower Family

COMMON DANDELION

(Taraxacum officinale Weber)

Description: Perennial without stem aboveground, foliage growth 4 to 20 inches; flowers a broad head consisting of 150 to 200 yellow florets; flower stem smooth to slightly hairy near top; any length to 24 inches.

Habitat Type: Common through the area where moisture is available and native vegetation has been disturbed and/or reduced: roadsides, lawns, ditchbanks, old hay fields, pastures, etc.
Sunflower Family

HEARTLEAF COCKLEBUR

*(Xanthium strumarium* L.)

**Description:** Annual with erect, rough, hairy branches that may be spotted; highly variable in size, dependent upon site; burs also variable, 1/2- to 2-inches long with many small or few large prickles.

**Habitat Type:** While seeming a natural for movement in hair and fur, the greatest concentrations in this state are established by water movement; most common on overflow lands. Poisonous, especially the seedlings.
MAYWEED

(Anthemis cotula L.)

Known As: Dog fennel, stinkweed

Description: Annual or winter annual; leaves yellowish green, fine hairs, and strong-scented; heads 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter, many florets—petal-like ray florets 15 to 20, white, to 1/2 inch long, center florets yellow.

Habitat Type: Common in barnyards and disturbed areas, primarily on fertile soils; often a problem on the flats in grain fields.
MEADOW SALSIFY

(Tragopogon pratensis L.)

Known As: Yellow goatsbeard, oyster plant

Description: Biennial reproducing by seeds, in old meadows, roadsides and disturbed places; stems from a fleshy taproot, erect, branched, 12 to 30 inches high, smooth with milky juice. Leaves alternate, simple, linear and tapering, the midrib appears to be a keel. Heads single, terminal, with yellow ray flowers (petals).

Habitat Type: Almost anywhere that the vegetative cover permits its establishment. Most common along roads. It is believed that the plumed seeds travel extensively on the radiators of automobiles.
Sunflower Family

OXEYE DAISY

*(Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.)

**Description:** Stem leaves alternate, simple with toothed edges and no obvious petiole, glabrous; flower heads terminal, solitary, 1 to 2 inches in diameter enclosing many flowers; ray-flowers (petals) 20 to 30, white, about 1/2 inch long; disk-flowers numerous and yellow.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial, reproducing by seed and rootstocks in meadows, pastures, old fields and on almost any type of disturbed area.
POVERTYWEED

(*Iva axillaris* Pursh.)

**Description:** Stems ascending, mostly branched, smooth or hairy, 8 to 24 inches high. Leaves opposite, entire, narrowly oblong, rather thick and crowded in appearance. Flower heads small and drooping in the axils of the upper leaves; flowers greenish yellow in color.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial reproducing by seeds, creeping root stalks and erect root stalks in grain fields, meadows, cultivated fields and disturbed places; very common on alkaline or slightly saline soil.
PRICKLY LETTUCE

(Lactuca serriola L.)

Known As: China lettuce, wild lettuce, compass plant

Description: Annual or winter annual; stems erect, mostly smooth, 24 to 60 inches high with milky juice; midrib of leaf (underneath) is prickly; heads numerous, pale yellow, containing 6 to 30 florets.

Habitat Type: Common throughout most of the state of Washington, cultivated and noncultivated lands, especially on sandy or dry soil sites.
RUSSIAN KNAPWEED

*Centaurea repens* L.

**Description:** Stems erect, 16 to 40 inches high, may be branched at the base or near the top. Leaves alternate, simple, complete; the basal leaves may be long and gradually narrowed to the stem. Flower heads solitary at the end of a leafy branch. Flowers within the head numerous, all tubular, varying in color from rose through blue to purple.

**Habitat Type:** Perennial reproducing by seeds and creeping rootstocks on fertile land either as disturbed land or in established fields. Particularly adapted to moist sites in summer-fallow areas.
Sunflower Family

SUNFLOWER

(*Helianthus annuus* L.)

**Description:** Stem erect, may be branched above, stout, coarse, rough and hairy, 1 1/2 to 6 feet high. Leaves simple, characteristically with three main veins. Flower heads single on the end of the stem or on short stems in the axils of the leaves. Ray flowers (petals) bright yellow.

**Habitat Type:** Annual, reproducing by seeds almost anywhere in cultivated fields, grain fields, along fence rows, on roadsides, disturbed places, and very common in overgrazed bunchgrass pastures.
Sunflower Family

TANSY RAGWORT

(*Senecio jacobaea* L.)

**Description:** Biennial or winter annual, occasionally a perennial. Stems coarse, hard, normally single, erect, 8 to 40 inches high. Leaves evenly distributed, somewhat cobwebby beneath: the lower ones with stems, the upper ones often without stems (petioles). Flower heads several in a cluster, bright yellow.

**Habitat Type:** Almost anywhere west of the Cascades where there is ample sunlight and no competition for space. Most common on cutover land prior to the reestablishment of desirable, low-growing plants.