



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225
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YELLOW NUTSEdge

Cyperus esculentus

THREAT: Yellow nutsedge is a sedge that has become a worldwide weed. The nutsedges gain their name from the tubers, or nutlets, produced on the end of rhizomes. Yellow nutsedge tubers can remain dormant in the soil for over ten years, producing plants in subsequent years. A single nutsedge plant may produce thousands of tubers in a single season. These tubers can easily be spread through cultivation and through the transportation of infested topsoil and nursery stock. Yellow nutsedge is considered by some to be one of the world's worst weeds, due to its extremely competitive nature and its ability to spread by rhizomes and tubers (the closely related purple nutsedge is also in this category). In parts of Eurasia and Africa, yellow nutsedge is grown for its tubers, which are edible.

DESCRIPTION: Yellow nutsedge is a perennial sedge, growing from 12 to 32 inches high. It has unbranched stems, which are solid and triangular in cross section, sprouting from a basal bulb. The three-ranked leaves grow primarily in clusters near the base of the stem. The glossy, yellow-green leaves are creased along the central vein, to form a v-shape. The underground portion of the plant consists of a basal bulb, roots, rhizomes and tubers. Rhizomes originating at the bulb grow out to form either another bulb or an underground tuber. Yellow nutsedge reproduces primarily by tubers, although it also produces flowers and seeds. The flower cluster is borne at the end of the stem, with long leaf-like bracts immediately below it. The flowers are yellowish-brown. This plant prefers moist soils and is found in fields, riverbanks, turf, ditches and cropland.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Yellow nutsedge is extremely difficult to eradicate. In agricultural fields, several control options are possible. Since this plant is not shade tolerant, planting a crop that forms an early, dense canopy can be used to limit tuber production, although this will not eliminate it. Frequent tillage throughout the growing season can also provide control. Herbicides can be used on young shoots but do not affect the tubers. In some situations, pigs have been used to grub out and eat the tubers. Due to the difficulty in controlling this weed, preventing initial infestations is the best management tool. Equipment should be carefully cleaned when being moved off an infested site. Additionally, sod and soil in nursery plants should be inspected to insure they are not contaminated with yellow nutsedge. Contact the weed control board for site-specific control recommendations.

Photos courtesy of Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board