

Oxeye Daisy

Leucanthemum vulgare



FAMILY	Asteraceae- daisies & sunflowers	ORIGIN	Eurasia
LIFE CYCLE	Perennial	OTHER NAMES	Dog daisy, White daisy, Whiteweed, Field daisy, Marguerite, Poorland flower

QUICK FACTS

- Oxeye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) are hardy perennials that can thrive in disturbed areas and out-compete native plants, disrupting local ecosystems.
- These plants reach heights of 1-2 feet, feature distinctive white flowers with yellow centers, and have an extensive root system that allows them to spread quickly.
- Found in various environments, from abandoned lots to meadows, oxeye daisies thrive in full sun and are present in every U.S. state, although they are less common in southern regions.

It is not unlikely that you will spot this plant proudly planted (and thriving) in both private and municipal flower boxes. Oxeye daisies have a way of winning over gardeners and landscapers with their charming simplicity. Masters of subterfuge, they quietly slip into our gardens and landscapes, drawn in by their effortless beauty and rugged, resilient nature. At first glance, their bright, cheerful blooms seem harmless, but there's more to them than meets the eye.

What does it look like?

The oxeye daisy is a perennial that can reach a height of 1-2 feet. Its basal stems spread horizontally across the ground and can develop roots at various points along their length, allowing it to establish itself more effectively in the soil. The upright stems in the plant's center grow vertically and may produce branches. The stems are covered with fine hairs.

There is a variety of daisy on the market called the Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum*), which is a hybrid between the oxeye daisy and max chrysanthemum (*Leucanthemum maximum*). These hybrids are distinguished by their larger flowers and are commonly marketed as a "safe" alternative to oxeye daisy. Shasta daisy should be carefully monitored (or not planted at all) because it tends to revert back to its parent species, oxeye daisy.



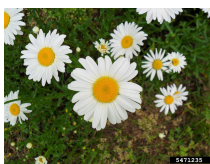
Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

Roots: An adventitious root system contributes to the plant's competitive success. Rhizomes with a strong root structure easily propagate. This ability to generate new growth is particularly pronounced when the plant experiences stress, such as mowing or other damage. When conditions become unfavorable, these rhizomes can spread and establish new plants, ensuring the species survives.



Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

Leaves: Basal leaves are round to spoon-shaped and have long petioles. They are simple with coarsely toothed margins. Stem leaves are alternate, coarsely toothed, and lance-shaped, with petioles that clasp the stem as they move up.



David Stephens, Bugwood.org

Flowers: The most obvious trait of oxeyes is the distinctive white flowers with yellow centers. The flowers grow on long stems, which hold them above the surrounding leaves. The yellow flower heads are about the size of a small coin, measuring between 0.4 and 0.8 inches across. The ray florets are bright white, and the disk florets are a cheerful yellow. Surrounding the flower head are the involucral bracts, which look like green leaves arranged in a shingle pattern. Each flower head has between 15 and 35 white ray florets that can produce viable seeds. The yellow disk florets are smaller, measuring 0.08-0.1 inches.



Tom Heutte, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Seeds: A prolific seed producer, healthy oxeye daisies can produce about 26,000 seeds per plant. The fruit is a type of small seed called an achene. Achenes are tiny, measuring about 0.04 to 0.12 inches long, with no pappus. They are cylindrical, with ridges on their surface, and feel smooth to the touch.



Steve Hurst, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database, Bugwood.org

Impact and Management

Livestock

Sheep, goats, and horses are known to graze on oxeye daisies without reservation, enjoying this plant as a food source. In contrast, cows and pigs tend to steer clear of these plants, likely due to their acrid flavor, which is unappealing to these animals. This dietary preference allows oxeye daisies to flourish and spread in certain pastures, particularly in areas with less competition from more favored forage species.

Erosion

Research has shown that regions with a higher prevalence of oxeye daisies often have larger patches of bare soil. This can be attributed to the plant's relatively shallow root system, especially when compared to the dense and extensive root networks of the grass species that would ideally dominate healthy pastures. Consequently, the risk of soil erosion significantly increases in areas heavily infested with oxeye daisies where grasses or other herbaceous plants have been displaced.



David Stephens, Bugwood.org

Oxeye daisy quickly germinates on bare soil and has difficulty becoming established in areas with good ground cover. Where healthy ground cover is unavailable, mulch or other litter can help prevent seeds from germinating. The weed also struggles in shady areas, so well-established broadleaf plant communities will also hinder its growth.

Because this weed is still sold as an ornamental seed, its invasion can be prevented by staying informed about local plant regulations. The commonly sold Shasta daisy should also be avoided, as this hybrid can revert to its parent plant, the oxeye daisy, becoming invasive.

DO's

- Improve soil health. Oxeye daisies thrive in poor soils. Amending soil with organic matter or nutrients can discourage their growth in unwanted areas.
- Be wary that this plant is currently sold as an ornamental, so it could appear anywhere.
- Overwhelm the plant with well-established crops, mulch, and native grass communities.

DON'Ts

- Transport contaminated soil. Oxeye daisy seeds can hitch a ride in soil or gravel. Avoid moving materials from infested areas to new sites.
- Plant in wildflower mixes. Some seed mixes labeled as "wildflower" or "pollinator-friendly" might include oxeye daisy. Always check the seed list carefully.
- Overgraze pastures, as overgrazing weakens desirable plants, leaving bare soil where oxeye daisies can easily establish and spread.



For more information on managing oxeye daisy, please visit www.nmweeds.org

