

Scentless Chamomile

Tripleurospermum inodorum



FAMILY	Asteraceae-daisies & sunflowers	ORIGIN	Europe and Western Asia
LIFE CYCLE	Annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial	OTHER NAMES	Scentless mayweed, False chamomile, Baldr's brow

QUICK FACTS

- Despite its daisy-like appearance and resemblance to soothing herbal teas, scentless chamomile is a noxious, invasive weed that taints milk and harms livestock. Its lack of fragrance is one of the few clues to its true identity.
- One square meter of scentless chamomile can produce up to 1.8 million seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for over a decade, making eradication extremely difficult once it's established.
- This weed reduces cereal crop yields, resists many herbicides, and thrives in disturbed soils, posing serious risks to both agriculture and ecosystem health across North America.

Scentless Chamomile is a relatively short and unassuming weed with small daisy-like flowers. Easily mistaken for a wildflower, these weeds were introduced to the US in the 1800s and often overlooked due to their resemblance to closely related plants, such as German and Roman chamomile, as well as mayweed and daisies. Primary problems caused by this invasive plant include reducing the production of cereal grains and causing blistering on the muzzles of livestock.

What does it look like?

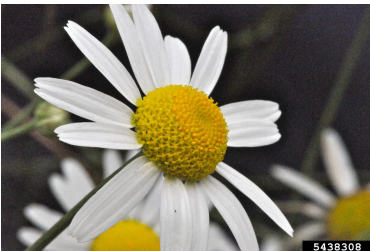
Scentless chamomile is a short, annual (sometimes biennial) herb with small daisy-like flowers having white petals and a yellow center. The Asteraceae (sunflower) family is notoriously large, with many species possessing similar foliage and flowers to scentless chamomile. Most of these similar plants can be distinguished by their flowers or crushed foliage, which have either a pleasant or bitter smell, while scentless chamomile, as the name implies, is scentless.



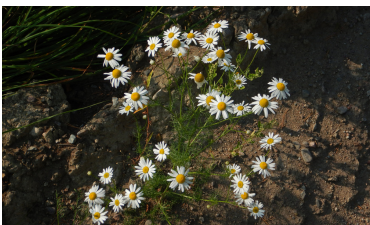
oleggushenkov, inaturalist.org



Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org



Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org



Enot Poluskuns, inaturalist.org

Plant: The stems typically exhibit an erect growth pattern, with ascending branches that may display sparse hairiness during their early stages of development; however, they can also appear prostrate. The plant will typically reach heights of 12 to 32 inches.

Roots: This plant grows from an extensive, fibrous root system, although it is quite shallow. New roots will sprout from the bottom of older stems.

Leaves: The leaf blades measure approximately 1 to 2 inches long and occur in an alternating pattern. Leaves are deeply divided into many thread-like segments, forming a lacy pattern distinctive of chamomile species. They clasp the stem and will become shorter nearer the stem tips.

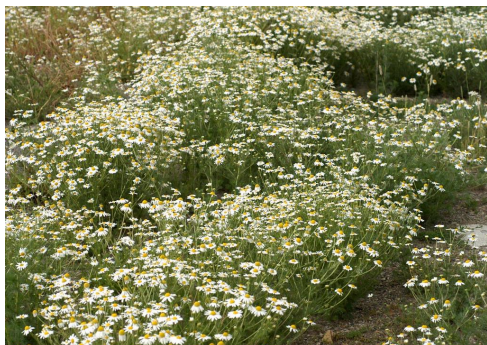
Flowers: Multiple inflorescences branch from the top of the stem. Flowers are small (approximately 1.5 inches) and daisy-like, featuring white petals and yellow centers. Each flower has about 10-24 florets surrounding a center, which is made up of several hundred yellow disc florets. Where the flowers attach to the stem, green bracts appear, their edges dry and brown.

Seeds: One seed will be produced by each flower petal (floret). When mature, these small seeds are elongated and brown with no pappus. Three distinct ridges appear along the length of the seed. Healthy populations of scentless chamomile can produce 1.8 million seeds per square foot.

Impact and Management

Livestock

Most livestock want nothing to do with this weed, but its presence can severely harm the production of forage and pasture grasses. The plant is unpalatable, and livestock that graze too close to it may experience blistering on the muzzle.



K. George Beck and James Sebastian, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Ecosystem Health

Once established, scentless chamomile displaces native plants, leading to a notable decline in floral and faunal biodiversity. Heavy spring growth forms large stands that will suppress the growth of native plant seedlings. Like most weeds, scentless chamomile will hoard moisture and nutrients, thereby reducing the availability of these resources for native species. This is a double-edged problem because, as scentless chamomile is unpalatable, the food provided by native plants is reduced without compensation, affecting local wildlife populations.

Wildlife Habitat

Farmers and ranchers face increased costs associated with managing this weed, including expenses for herbicides, additional labor, and mechanical control measures. The economic burden on farmers and the potential for decreased food supply contribute to the overall negative impact on food security in the region. Scentless chamomile aggressively competes with cereal grains (one of the most important food crops in our country and throughout the world). It is estimated that for every scentless chamomile plant in one square meter, yields of wheat crops are reduced by 0.9-11 percent.

Scentless chamomile seeds can remain viable for more than 10 years, meaning if the plant is allowed to set seed for the first time, eradication becomes extremely difficult. If the plant has already become established, control is a more feasible goal than eradication. Mowing, tilling, and hand-weeding used in combination can help keep the plant at bay. The most successful treatment option is competition. The successful reintroduction of desirable plant species, especially those that rebuild depleted soils, can effectively crowd out scentless chamomile, as the weed can only persist in frequently disturbed soils.

DO's

- Hand-pull small patches early. Remove plants by the root before they flower and go to seed. Dispose by bagging and burning, or landfilling to prevent reinfestation.
- Enhance crop or grass competition. Dense plantings of competitive crops like winter wheat, barley, or perennial grasses suppress chamomile emergence, especially on disturbed soils.
- Prevent the spread through sanitation. Clean all equipment, vehicles, and tools after working in infested areas. Tarp seed or grain transport and avoid using contaminated materials from known infestations.

DON'Ts

- Don't compost flowering plants or seeds. Composting may not kill all seeds. Bag and dispose of flowering or seed-bearing plants properly.
- Mow only once or too late. One mowing won't stop scentless chamomile as it can re-flower below the cut line. If mowing, start high and make successive cuts lower before flowering occurs.
- It is advised not to engage in tilling activities within moist, cool soil conditions. Such practices may jeopardize the integrity of live plants and facilitate the dissemination of root fragments, particularly those comprising the fibrous root mass.



For more information on managing scentless chamomile, please visit www.nmweeds.org

