

Common Teasel

Dipsacus fullonum



FAMILY

Dipsacaceae- teasels

ORIGIN

Europe

LIFE CYCLE

Biennial

OTHER NAMES

Teasel, Fuller's teasel, Wild teasel

QUICK FACTS

- Common teasel is an herbaceous biennial that produces **thousands of seeds** per plant. It is commonly spread by wildlife and floral decorations, and competes with native plants for space and resources.
- Native to Europe, this weed has adapted to live in a wide range of habitats, from dry to riparian. It is most commonly found in moist, disturbed, sunny areas, but humans and animals often **introduce seeds** to other areas as well.
- Common teasel grows small purple flowers in a ring on a spiky flowerhead. It can grow up to 7 feet tall, has opposite leaves that collect water on the stem, and has a basal rosette about **2 feet in diameter**. Leaves are entire and toothed along margins and can be oblong or lanceolate.

Common teasel can adapt to several different conditions, allowing it to spread easily. It is considered an invasive weed only in New Mexico, but it is on several watchlists in other states due to its adaptability and competitiveness. It often out-competes endangered native species, such as Sacramento Mountains thistle (*Cirsium vinaceum*). It threatens disturbed sites like pastures, highways, and riparian areas.

What does it look like?

Common teasel is a biennial, but it can act as a monocarpic perennial and grow from the root crown until it can flower. It can grow up to 7 feet tall, and has several egg-shaped flowerheads. It can be confused with other teasel varieties and some thistles. The identifying characteristics of common teasels are the opposite leaves that collect water near the stem, and a purple ring of small flowers around the flowerhead. Both basal leaves and stem leaves lack lobes and are lanceolate.



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Steve Hurst, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database, Bugwood.org

Plant: Common teasel can germinate in the spring or fall. In the first year, the plant presents as a basal rosette similar to other teasels and thistles. In its second year, common teasel grows a long, erect stem that can reach 7 feet tall, with long, pointed leaves arranged in pairs that hold water and often trap insects. The stem is green, hollow, and has ridges with prickles.

Roots: Common teasel grows a taproot about 2 feet deep, and fibrous roots extending from the taproot about 1 foot wide. Roots usually fully develop in the first year of growth.

Leaves: Basal leaves grow in the plant's first year. They are green, oval-shaped, and can grow up to 12 inches long. They are often wrinkled and scalloped, and older leaves may be hairy. Stem leaves clasp the stem and collect water near the leaf axil. They are opposite each other, about 10 inches long, and lanceolate (long and pointed) shaped. Stem leaves of common teasel are also entire with toothed margins.

Flowers: Flowers occur in the second year after the stem has bolted and matured. Lavender-colored flowers can be seen from early summer to early fall, in a ring around the head, but only live for one day, then form a new ring of flowers that quickly die, until the entire head has flowered. Flowerheads of common teasel are egg-shaped, up to 4 inches long, and have a spiky, leafy bract that curves from below to above the flowerhead.

Seeds: Common teasel produces through seeds exclusively, but can produce over 3000 seeds per plant. Seeds fall near the parent plant, but can be carried by water, human, and animal movement as well. They do not remain viable for long (up to 5 years in laboratory conditions, usually only 2 in the wild). Seeds are very small (3mm), rectangular, brown, and grooved.

Impact and Management

Ecosystem Health

While birds, small mammals, and pollinators enjoy this plant, common teasel displaces native plants, resulting in a notable loss of floral biodiversity. This can significantly reduce forage availability and give more opportunity for other weeds to grow.



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Soil Degradation

Common teasel threatens agriculture by competing for resources and reducing land productivity. In addition to those direct threats, common teasel poses indirect threats to agriculture and natural resource conservation on the landscape by degrading soil quality. Additionally, dense weed growth can hinder the regeneration of native vegetation, leading to long-term soil health issues and further degradation.

Economic

Common teasel will become a monoculture through aggressive seed production and vegetative growth. It can reduce the available forage for domestic livestock.



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The best method of teasel management is prevention; do not disturb areas unnecessarily, clean equipment, and do not use flowerheads as decoration to prevent seed dispersal and possible germination. If infestation occurs, mechanical methods like pulling work when a common teasel is removed below the root crown to prevent regrowth. Repeated cutting and mowing can also eradicate populations over several years, but are not considered effective management methods alone. Herbicides are effective at control when applied in early summer or fall and combined with mechanical methods. Preventing flowerheads from producing seeds is the most important way to manage common teasel.

DO's

- Prevent seeds from spreading by cutting the seedhead right before flowering.
- Combine several management methods, including mechanical, herbicides, and seeding desired plants.
- Cut the plant below the root crown to prevent regrowth.

DON'Ts

- Leave it until it is widespread, as it is easier to treat in individual or small infestations.
- Disturb areas necessary, as this gives the weed an opportunity to grow.
- Use dried flowerheads as decoration, as flowerheads can store seeds and spread to other areas.



For more information on managing Common teasel, please visit www.nmweeds.org

