

# ABSINTH WORMWOOD

(*Artemisia absinthium* L.)



# ABSINTH WORMWOOD

State Noxious Weed List: **Yes.**

Absinth wormwood is a member of the sagebrush family, which is easily recognized by the strong sage odor. The plant also is known as American or common wormwood, mugwort or madderwort, and wormwood sage. Unlike other plants in the sagebrush family, absinth wormwood dies back to the root crown each winter, with new shoots emerging each spring. Absinth wormwood is grown in herb gardens for the sage flavor of the leaves. The young flower heads are the source of aromatic oil used to prepare vermouth and absinth. The oil of absinth wormwood is also an active ingredient in antiseptic liniments.

Identification and growth form:

Absinth wormwood is a perennial fragrant forb or herb. The plant commonly grows 3 to 5 feet tall at maturity. Absinth wormwood is woody at the base and regrows from the soil level each spring from a large taproot. Leaves are light to olive green, 2 to 5 inches long and divided two or three times into deeply lobed leaflets. Leaves and stems are covered with fine, silky hairs that give the plant a grayish appearance. Flower stalks appear at each upper leaf node and produce numerous yellow flower heads 1/8 inch in diameter, which appear from late July through mid-August in North Dakota. Each fruit contains one seed, which is less than 1/16 inch long, smooth, flattened and light gray-brown. These small seeds are scattered easily by wind, water and animals, and in hay. Absinth wormwood is a prolific seed producer but also can spread by short roots. The plant is most often found on dry soils, in overgrazed pasture and rangeland, wastelands and roadsides.

Why is this plant a concern?

Absinth wormwood causes economic losses by reducing available forage, tainting the milk of cattle that graze it, and medically as a pollen source for allergies and asthma. Absinth wormwood can reduce forage production severely in pasture and rangeland and is especially troublesome when land is overgrazed. Allergy sufferers should avoid walking through absinth wormwood infestations when the plant is flowering in late July and August.

How do I control this plant?

**Chemical.** A variety of auxin-type herbicides, including products that contain clopyralid (Stinger, Transline or Curtail), dicamba (various), Milestone (aminopyralid), 2,4-D, Tordon (picloram) and glyphosate (various), will control absinth wormwood. These herbicides should be applied when the plant is at least 12 inches tall and actively growing. Herbicides applied too early in the growing season generally result in poor control. Herbicides applied from late June until mid-August have given better residual control the following growing season than either spring or fall treatments. If a fall treatment is desired, the plants should be mowed in early to midsummer to promote active regrowth and to improve herbicide coverage.

**Cultural.** Livestock generally will not graze absinth wormwood except in early spring. Mowing and cultivation do not control this weed.

**Biological.** No biological control agents or pathogens are available for this weed.