Common Garden Weeds
Identification Guide

Photos are courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and clip art

NDSU encourages you to use and share this content, but please do so under the conditions of our Creative Commons license. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this work as long as you give full attribution, don’t use the work for commercial purposes and share your resulting work similarly. For more information, visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons.

NDSU encourages you to use and share this content, but please do so under the conditions of our Creative Commons license. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this work as long as you give full attribution, don’t use the work for commercial purposes and share your resulting work similarly. For more information, visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons.

January 2017

Photos by: Clipart and U.S. Department of Agriculture
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compiled by and Sources</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grass Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnyardgrass (<em>Echinochloa crus-galli</em>)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crabgrass (<em>Digitaria</em> spp.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quackgrass (<em>Elymus repens</em>)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow foxtail (<em>Setaria pumila</em>)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green foxtail (<em>Setaria viridis</em>)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composite Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absinth wormwood (<em>Artemisia absinthium</em>)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada thistle (<em>Cirsium arvense</em>)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandelion (<em>Taraxacum officinale</em>)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perennial sowthistle (<em>Sonchus arvensis</em>)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prickly lettuce (<em>Lactuca serriola</em>)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plaintain Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadleaf plantain (<em>Plantago major</em>)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Mint Family
- Catnip (*Nepeta cataria* L.) 14
- Ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) 15

## Pink Family
- Common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) 16

## Goosefoot Family
- Common lambsquarter (*Chenopodium album*) 17
- Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) 18

## Mallow Family
- Common mallow (*Malva neglecta*) 19

## Purslane Family
- Common purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) 20

## Nightshade Family
- Eastern black nightshade (*Solanum ptychanthum*) 21

## Buckwheat Family
- Prostrate knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare*) 22

## Pigweed Family
- Redroot pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*) 23
- Waterhemp (*Amaranthus rudis Sauer*) 24

## Woodsorrel Family
- Yellow woodsorrel (*Oxalis stricta*) 25

## Bean Family
- Black medic (*Medicago lupulina* L.) 26

Questions 27
Introduction

The following guide will help you identify common weeds in the garden.

Weed identification characteristics to look for are leaf shape, margin, attachment and arrangement; plant growth habit; stem features; and root and flower characteristics. This manual will highlight the key identification characteristics of each weed.
Compiled by:

- Alicia Harstad, NDSU Extension Stutsman County agent
- Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension food and nutrition specialist
- Allie Benson, NDSU Extension program assistant

Sources:


Barnyardgrass

- **Family:** Grass
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Ligule and auricles are absent. Midvein is prominent and stem is flat.

Photo by: Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org
Crabgrass

- **Family**: Grass
- **Lifecycle**: Annual
- **Identification**: Inflorescence is a panicle of branches. Leaf blades are pubescent. The ligule is membranous. Crabgrass reproduces by seeds only. It does not have rhizomes.
Quackgrass

- **Family:** Grass
- **Lifecycle:** Perennial
- **Identification:** It has extensively creeping rhizomes. No hairs are on the leaves. Inflorescences are a compact spike. It also has clasping auricles.
Yellow Foxtail

- **Family:** Grass
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Long hairs are on the top of leaves near the stem attachment. The ligule is a short, fringed membrane. The seed head is compact.
Green Foxtail

- **Family:** Grass
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Its appearance is similar to yellow foxtail but it does not have long hairs on leaves. Seed heads are slightly longer than yellow foxtail.

Photo by: Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California – Davis, Bugwood.org
Absinth Wormwood

- **Family:** Composite
- **Lifecycle:** Perennial
- **Identification:** It has a strong sage fragrance and grows 3 to 5 feet tall. Leaves are alternate, 2 to 5 inches long, and have deeply lobed leaflets. Plants are a blue gray and covered in hairs. It’s considered a North Dakota noxious weed.

Photos by: Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org
Canada Thistle

- **Family:** Composite
- **Lifecycle:** Perennial
- **Identification:** Plants usually grow 2 to 3 feet. Leaves are alternate, oblong and deeply cut, and have spiny, toothed edges. Plants vigorously reproduce vegetatively by rhizomes, making it difficult to control. It’s considered a North Dakota noxious weed.
Dandelion

- **Family:** Composite
- **Lifecycle:** Perennial
- **Identification:** It has a rosette growth habit, with seed heads growing erect from the center. Leaves are oblong with deep lobes. Stems contain milky sap. The plant has a deep taproot. Flowers are yellow.

Photo by: Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org
Perennial Sowthistle

• **Family:** Composite

• **Lifecycle:** Perennial

• **Identification:** Spines are found only along the leaf margins. Leaves are alternate with a clasping attachment.
Prickly Lettuce

- **Family:** Composite
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Spines are found along the midvein of leaves. Leaves are alternate, and have wavy margins and a clasping attachment.

Photo by: Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org
Broadleaf Plantain

- **Family**: Plantain
- **Lifecycle**: Perennial
- **Identification**: Leaves are waxy, ovate and deeply veined. The plant grows in a small rosette shape and has a shallow taproot. Flowers are inconspicuous, compact spikes that grow erect from the center of the plant. Typically, plants grow in soil-compacted areas.

Photo by: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org
Catnip

• **Family**: Mint

• **Lifecycle**: Perennial

• **Identification**: Plants have a square stem (characteristic of the mint family). Leaves are opposite and ovate, with serrated edges. Stems have fine hairs. Plants are blue gray and have a mint fragrance. Flowers are white to purple.

Photo by: Theodore Webster, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org
Ground Ivy
(Creeping Charlie)

- **Family:** Mint
- **Lifecycle:** Perennial
- **Identification:** Leaves are opposite and round, with shallow, rounded, lobed leaf margins. Stems are square because it is a member of the mint family. Rooting occurs at nodes, which allows the plant to grow as an aggressive ground cover.

Photo by: Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org
Common Chickweed

- **Family:** Pink
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** The plant spreads as a vigorous ground cover. Leaves are opposite, small and smooth, and have a pointed tip. Flowers are small and white with five petals that are deeply parted (may appear to be 10 petals).

Photo by: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org
Common Lambsquarters

- **Family:** Goosefoot
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Leaves are alternate, with leaf margins that can vary from wavy to almost entire. Leaves appear to have a frosted look due to a mealy powder on the leaves. The underside of the seedlings are red to purple. Stems can be red to purple to green.
Kochia

- **Family:** Goosefoot
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Seedling are highly pubescent. Mature plants are highly branched, bushy and typically 2 to 7 feet tall. Leaves are alternate, linear to ovate and directly attached to the stem. Stems can turn red to purple with maturity.
Common Mallow

- **Family:** Mallow
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Plants grow low to the ground. Leaves are alternate and rounded with several lobes, and have long petioles. Flowers are small and vary from white to purple.

Photo by: Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org
Common Purslane

- **Family:** Purslane
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Plants are prostrate and will form mats. Leaves are tear-drop shaped and smooth, shiny and succulent. Flowers are yellow with five petals. Roots will sprout readily from leaves cut off the plant. Therefore, weeds should be completely removed from a garden for control.

Photo by: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org
Eastern Black Nightshade

- **Family:** Nightshade
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** The plant has a branching growth habit. Leaves are alternate and ovate, with wavy leaf margins. Flowers typically are white but rarely purple, with five petals. Berries are small and black or dark purple when mature. Berries are toxic.
Prostrate Knotweed

- **Family:** Buckwheat
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Leaves are alternate, small and narrowly elliptical. Plants will form mats due to their growth habit. Ocrea (membranous stipules) surround the base of each petiole. Ocrea is characteristic of plants in the buckwheat family.

Photo by: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org
Redroot Pigweed

- **Family:** Pigweed
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Seedlings are distinctly red on their underside. Cotyledons are linear, whereas true leaves are egg-shaped in an alternate arrangement. The petiole is as long as or shorter than the leaf blade. Seed heads are compact.

Photo by: Phil Westra, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Photo by: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org
Waterhemp

- **Family:** Pigweed
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Leaves are alternate and ovate to lanceolate. Waterhemp often is confused with redroot pigweed. Waterhemp stems typically are hairless, whereas redroot pigweed stems have hairs. Waterhemp leaves tend be narrower and have a waxier appearance than redroot pigweed leaves. Seed heads form long spikes.

Photos by: Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org
Yellow Woodsorrel (Oxalis)

- **Family:** Woodsorrel
- **Lifecycle:** Annual and perennial forms
- **Identification:** Plants are small. Leaflets are heart-shaped and meet at a common point. Leaves are alternate and have smooth margins. Flowers are yellow and have five petals.

Photo by: Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org
Black Medic

- **Family:** Bean
- **Lifecycle:** Annual
- **Identification:** Leaflets do not meet at a common point and are obovate, with slightly serrated leaf margins. Flowers are small, yellow and grow in clusters.

Photo by: Karan A. Rawlins, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org
Questions?

Contact your local office of the NDSU Extension Service.