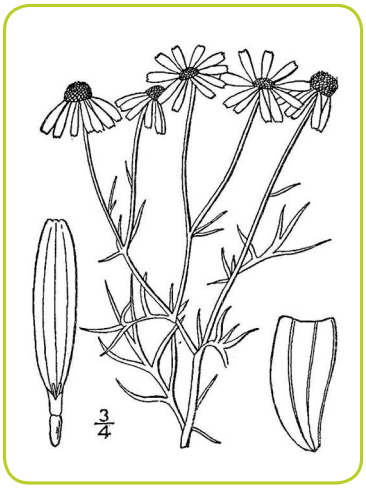
FALSE and SCENTLESS CHAMOMILE

(*Matricaria chamomilla* L. and *Matricaria maritima* L.)

State Noxious Weed List: **No.**

False chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla* L.) and scentless chamomile (*M. maritima* L.) are members of the aster family and have flowers that resemble the common daisy. Some taxonomists place these plants in the genius *Anthemis*. Both plants are native to Eurasia, are considered naturalized in the northern Great Plains and are common in the region. The most obvious difference between the two species is the pleasant aroma of false chamomile, while, as the name implies, scentless chamomile has very little odor when crushed.

False chamomile



False chamomile
(from NRCS plants database)

Scentless chamomile
(from NRCS plants database)

Scentless chamomile

FALSE and SCENTLESS CHAMOMILE

False chamomile has been used for medicinal purposes for hundreds of years and most often is consumed today as chamomile tea, which reportedly has relaxation benefits. As with many homeopathic medicines, chamomile is credited with curing a variety of aches and illnesses, including soothing and calming of nerves, reducing inflammation and aching muscles, and reducing hay fever, asthma and morning sickness. Today chamomile commonly is found in air fresheners, cosmetics, insect repellents and potpourri.

Identification and growth form:

Both chamomile species are annual herbs and have white daisylike flowers. False chamomile blooms from May through August, and scentless chamomile blooms somewhat later from June through September. Plants grow 6 to 18 inches tall and commonly are found in wet sites, road ditches, old gardens and weedy (waste) areas. Scentless chamomile flowers tend to be larger (1 to 1.5 inches across) than false chamomile (0.5 to 1 inch across). Seeds are approximately 2 millimeters long, dark brown, with three ribs on one side and a broad brown central area on the other. Both plants have very finely divided leaves from 0.75 to 2.3 inches long, but scentless chamomile generally has more leaves and appears more bushy than false chamomile.

Why is this plant a concern?

False chamomile was a candidate for the North Dakota state noxious weed list in the late 1970s and early 1980s because the weed was spreading fast in cropland, especially in the north-central region of the state. Many farmers were concerned because false chamomile was tolerant to all herbicides then available for use in crops. However, with the introduction of Glean (chlorsulfuron), landowners had an effective herbicide for false chamomile control. This plant is listed on several county noxious weed lists. Spring and fall-emerging plants can reduce wheat yields by 20 percent to 60 percent if left unattended. In addition, scentless chamomile has poor nutrition value and is not palatable to livestock.

Several other members of the "daisy" family, including pineapple-weed [*Matricaria matricarioides* (Less.) Porter], oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.) and dog fennel or mayweed chamomile (*Anthemis cotula* L.), also can become weedy. Of these species, oxeye daisy has been the most invasive and is included on several state and provincial noxious weed lists.

How do I control these plants?

Chemical. Today, chamomile species can be controlled easily with any sulfonylurea herbicide such as Ally, Cimarron or Escort (metsulfuron) and Telar (chlorsulfuron). Bromoxynil plus MCPA and Tordon (picloram) also provide good chamomile control.

Mechanical. Hand-pulling can be an effective control method in small infestations of chamomile. Mowing early in the growing season or before plants flower will reduce populations but should be repeated often. Shallow tillage is recommended during hot, dry weather.

Biological. Several biological control agents have been researched for scentless chamomile control. The seed-head weevil, *Omphalapion hookerorum,* feeds on developing seeds of the plant, thereby reducing seed production. The stem-boring weevil, *Microplontus endentulus,* feeds on the interior of the stem and produces hollow areas that reduce the vigor of the plant. *Rhopalmyia tripleurospermi,* the scentless chamomile gall midge, forms a gall on the plant, which acts as a nutrient sink that can interrupt and stunt the growth of the plant. Research still is being conducted on these biocontrol agents to predict effectiveness in reducing plant population.