



Common Ragweed

DID YOU KNOW?

Pollen from common ragweed and giant ragweed is the main cause of hay fever in North America. Each ragweed plant can produce up to a billion pollen grains. Wind can carry the light pollen up to 640 km (400 miles). It is easy for people to inhale the tiny pollen grains.



ORIGINS

Most of the 30 or so ragweed species are native to North and South America. Common ragweed is the most widespread of all the ragweeds. It was accidentally imported to Europe in the 1940s, and has spread widely throughout many parts of Europe since then.



Common ragweed often grows on abandoned farms in Eastern Europe.

THE COMMON RAGWEED PLANT

Common ragweed is an annual, meaning it lives only one season. It is one of the first plants that grows where the soil has been disturbed -- in fields, gardens, roadsides, and waste places.

The plant grows up to 150 cm (5 feet) tall.

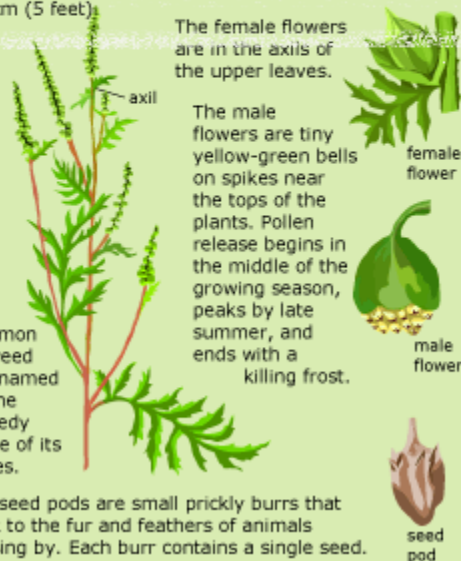
There are separate female and male flowers on each plant.

The female flowers are in the axils of the upper leaves.

The male flowers are tiny yellow-green bells on spikes near the tops of the plants. Pollen release begins in the middle of the growing season, peaks by late summer, and ends with a killing frost.

Common ragweed was named for the raggedy shape of its leaves.

The seed pods are small prickly burrs that stick to the fur and feathers of animals passing by. Each burr contains a single seed.



CLASSIFYING COMMON RAGWEED

FAMILY

Asteraceae (sunflower family)

Asteraceae is the largest family of flowering plants, and includes about 1,100 genera and 20,000 species. All the plants in this family have tiny flowers packed together. Look closely next time you see a daisy or a dandelion. What looks like one flower is actually many little flowers.



GENUS

Ambrosia

Ragweeds were named after the delicious food eaten by the Greek gods to make them live forever. It is not known why this name was given to ragweed. Perhaps it was because horses liked to eat ragweed.

Common ragweed (*A. artemisiifolia*) grows up to 1.5 m (5 ft).

Giant ragweed (*A. trifida*) grows up to 4 m (13 ft).



SPECIES

artemisiifolia

This Greek name refers to the fact that common ragweed leaves look like those of plants in the genus *Artemisia*.

leaf of common ragweed (*A. artemisiifolia*)



leaf of wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

FRIEND...



Common ragweed provides food and shelter for animals. Rabbits and grasshoppers eat the leaves. Voles and many different species of birds eat the seeds.



...OR FOE?



Ahh...
..choo!

Many people suffer from hay fever and asthma caused by ragweed pollen. Common ragweed and giant ragweed cause more hay fever than all other plants put together.

Source URL: <https://www.usbg.gov/common-ragweed>