

## Weed of The Week

### Marestail (*Conyza canadensis*)

Also known as Canadian horseweed or just “horseweed”, this week’s weed is a member of Ohio’s noxious weeds list. This plant is unique and challenging because it can behave as both a summer and winter annual plant. Seeds can germinate in late summer to early fall (winter annual) or in the spring (summer annual). When it’s a winter annual, marestail remains in the rosette stage through the winter then bolts in early spring. As a summer annual, marestail is in the rosette stage for a short period before bolting in early-mid summer. Marestail forms a single, unbranched hairy stem that is densely covered in alternating oblanceolate leaves measuring 3-4 inches long. Several small flowers grow on multi-stemmed, broom-like panicles at the top of the stems. This gives the plant its name because they resemble a horse’s tail when in bloom. Seed heads form as tiny, puff balls like miniature dandelions. Marestail can reach up to 5 feet in height.

Control of marestail is difficult as it has developed herbicide resistance and single plants can produce 200,000 seeds. Effective preemergent herbicides include flumioxazin (e.g. SureGuard, BroadStar); oryzalin (e.g. Surflan); and isoxaben (e.g. Gallery). Effective post-emergent herbicides include carfentrazone-ethyl (e.g. QuickSilver) if mixed with a phenoxy-type postemergent herbicide such as 2,4-D, and 2,4-D is effective if mixed with dicamba, MCPP, or MCPA. However, no horseweed management strategy should depend entirely on herbicides. Cultural management techniques include maintaining a 2–3-inch mulch layer to bury seed and limit seed germination. For smaller amounts of marestail, physically removing the plants through cultivation or even hand pulling before seeds are produced is also effective. Continual mowing or string trimming prevents seed head development and will eventually exhaust the resources of this annual plant.

