

Cutleaf vipergrass (*Scorzonera laciniata*)

Introduction: Despite its name, cutleaf vipergrass is not a grass! Instead, it is a forb that is native to Europe and a member of the Asteraceae plant family. It looks like western salsify (*Tragopogon dubious*), and in fact, one of its alternate common names is false salsify. In recent years the Schutter Diagnostic Lab has had an increasing number of questions and identification requests related to this plant, mainly from lawn, roadside, and pasture settings. This species is listed as a noxious weed in Utah based on its observed rapid spread in disturbed areas, but little information is available about its impacts or management.



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Sample submitted to Schutter Diagnostic Lab. Noelle Orloff, MSU.

Identification and Biology: Cutleaf vipergrass is a biennial plant, meaning it forms a rosette in the first year and flowers, sets seed, and dies during the second year. It reproduces only by seed and has a narrow taproot. Plants are 6 to 18 inches tall with hollow stems. Bright yellow flowers are about 1 to 2 inches wide and resemble those of western salsify or dandelion. Each stem has one flower at the end, and the flowers are open for a few hours daily. Leaves are often deeply dissected with long, linear lobes. These long narrow leaf segments may resemble grass, leading to the common name. Cutleaf vipergrass also has white milky sap, again resembling western salsify or dandelion.



Jason Baker, University of Utah.

Habitat and Spread: Cutleaf vipergrass grows in disturbed areas like roadsides, lawns, and pastures. It prefers full sun. Seeds are like those of western salsify or dandelion and are spread by wind.

Management Options: Since so little information is available about cutleaf vipergrass, there currently are no control recommendations backed by research. However, it is reasonable to try treatments that are effective on its close relative western salsify. It depends on seeds for reproduction and spread, so preventing seed production is important. Since this plant has a taproot, a great control strategy is hand-pulling before seeds are formed. Mowing cutleaf vipergrass before it goes to seed is also a management possibility, though it does seem to flower and set seed relatively rapidly after mowing in lawns. For herbicides, one option would be to try products with the active ingredients 2,4-D and dicamba. This combination has been shown to be effective in controlling western salsify, particularly if applied prior to flowering.

Additional Resources: <https://slco.org/weeds/noxious-weeds/cutleaf-vipergrass/>

Weed Post Puzzle: Test your knowledge of cutleaf vipergrass

LAYLESSFASIF

_____ Another common name for cutleaf vipergrass

AHTU

_____ Western state where cutleaf vipergrass is noxious

NBNEALII

_____ Plant that is vegetative one year then flowers, produces seed, and dies the next year

EINSSTLWAYFSRE

_____ Cutleaf vipergrass shares many characteristics with this other forb in the Asteraceae family

CEEDSDITS

_____ Margins of leaves of cutleaf vipergrass are _____

EARACSETEA

_____ Cutleaf vipergrass is not a grass, but a forb in this plant family

IOOSEN

_____ Original use for cutleaf vipergrass*

**refer to Additional Resources for answer*

Solutions are posted to the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:

http://msuextension.org/invasiveplants/monthly_weed_post.html

