

Sulfur Cinquefoil

Potentilla recta

Rose Family

Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Identification Tips

- Perennial with stout, hairy, leafy unbranched stems, reaching up to 3 feet tall
- Light yellow flowers with 5 heart-shaped petals surrounding a darker yellow center
- Leaves palmately lobed with 5 to 7 long leaflets uniformly toothed along the edges

Biology

- Flowers from early June through July
- Reproduces primarily by seed but can spread by roots if moved by mechanical equipment
- Deep taproot surrounded by shallow, spreading side roots that regenerate annually
- Seeds can remain viable in the soil 4 or more years
- Individual plants can live up to 20 years

Impacts

- Highly invasive, taking over all types of habitat, except full shade; it is not limited by soil type
- Displaces native and beneficial plants
- Significantly reduces forage value of rangelands and pastures

Distribution

- Found throughout King County in both urban and rural areas, from Milton to Skykomish
- Grows in open grassy areas and pastures and with shrubs such as Scotch broom; also found along railroads, logged areas and roadsides
- Thrives in full sun, but will also establish in partly shady areas and moist soils



Originally from central Europe, Asia and the Middle East, sulfur cinquefoil was first discovered in Washington in 1937.



Sulfur cinquefoil spreads rapidly and is of little value as a forage plant.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: 206-296-0290
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds

What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to control the spread of sulfur cinquefoil in the county. Do your part by removing this weed from your property. If you find sulfur cinquefoil growing on public lands, please report its location to our 24-hour program information line at 206-296-0290.



Sulfur cinquefoil leaf

Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed over several growing seasons.

Manual: For small sites with few plants, pull or dig up plants and remove as much root as possible so the plant will not re-sprout. This method can be highly labor-intensive and to be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so no new seeds are produced. Best time to dig up plants is in the spring or early summer when the soil is still moist and before the seeds mature. Roots are deep and extensive. If the plant is in seed, carefully bag and cut off the seed heads before digging up the rest of the plant.



Controlling sulfur cinquefoil often requires manually digging out the root ball for best results.

Mechanical: Mowing, however frequent, will not control sulfur cinquefoil because the massive, woody root system stores considerable food reserves and once mowed, plants simply send up new shoots. A single plowing may increase sulfur cinquefoil cover, but on productive agricultural sites, an intensive management program that combines cultivation and annual crops will effectively control this weed.

Chemical: Herbicides can be effective on sulfur cinquefoil, especially if combined with manual control and monitoring for surviving plants. **Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label.** Repeat applications may be necessary on regrowth in the fall and the next season. Products containing glyphosate are most effective if applied to actively growing plants. Glyphosate is absorbed by the growing leaves (not woody stems). However, glyphosate is “non-selective” and will injure any grass or other plants that it comes in contact with, so do

not drip on desirable plants. Selective broadleaf herbicides with the active ingredient triclopyr, 2,4-D or metsulfuron work well for lawn or grasslands as they won't harm most grasses. When using this type of herbicide or one with glyphosate, do not cut down the treated plants until they have died completely. This can take two weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.

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