



# Sheep Sorrel

*Rumex acetosella* L.

**Common Names:** sheep sorrel, field sorrel, red sorrel

**Native Origin:** Europe

**Description:** An herbaceous perennial in the buckwheat family (*Polygonaceae*) growing to a height of 4 to 12 inches. The stems are upright, branched at top, slender and reddish in color. The arrow-shaped leaves are simple, 1-3 inches long, and smooth with a pair of horizontal lobes at base. Lower leaves are spade-shaped and without lobes. Flowers are green to red to rust brown and clustered near the top of plant. Male and female flowers are usually on separate plants with male glowers being yellow to red and female flowers greenish. Flowers bloom May to October. Seeds are reddish or golden brown with rust brown hulls that adhere to seeds. Seeds can remain viable in soil for 10 to 20 years. The root system is made up of shallow fibrous roots and extensive horizontal roots that can reach depths of 5 feet. Sheep sorrel reproduces by seeds and creeping roots that produce new shoots.



**Habitat:** It is located in open disturbed areas, pastures, meadows, and utility, roadside, and railroad right-of-ways. It prefers sandy or gravelly soils and does not tolerate shade.

**Distribution:** This widespread species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in AZ, CT, HI, NY, OR, TN, VA, WA, WI, and WV.

**Ecological Impacts:** It can spread extensively, especially on acidic and nutrient-deficient soils. Causes hay fever in humans and can poison livestock, if consumed in sufficient quantities.



### Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Hand pull plants attempting to remove entire root mass and all rhizomes.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as dicamba or triclopyr. Follow label and state requirements.

**References:** <http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.nps.gov/plants/alien](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien), [www.turf.uiuc.edu/weed\\_web/descriptions/redsorrel.htm](http://www.turf.uiuc.edu/weed_web/descriptions/redsorrel.htm), <http://webapps.lib.uconn.edu/ipane>, [www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/pictures/photo/RUMACE\\_MRB3.jpg](http://www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/pictures/photo/RUMACE_MRB3.jpg), Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, an Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 113-114