



# Elecampane *Inula helenium* L.

**Common Names:** elecampagne, elfwort, scabwort, elf dock, wild sunflower, horseheal, velvet dock, alant, yellow starwort, inula, inul, horse elder, scabwort

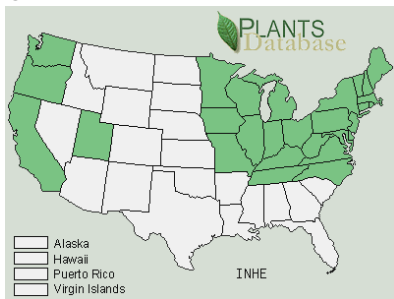
**Native Origin:** south-east Europe and western Asia. It was introduced to America by early colonists. In the 19th century a tincture of its roots was thought useful in reducing fevers and as a diuretic, but it may have caused more illness than it cured.

**Description:** Coarse, herbaceous perennial in the aster family (Asteraceae) growing from 2 to 8 feet in height and bearing resemblance to sunflowers. Upon germination, the plant produces a basal rosette of leaves, and may continue to produce only basal leaves for a number of years until it is sufficiently large enough to bolt. The basal leaves are borne on long petioles and are from 10 to 20 inches long and 4 to 8 inches wide. Leaves are rough above and soft with velvety white hairs below. Long slender ray flowers project out from bright yellow flower heads, 2 to 4 inches in diameter and flower July to September. Flower heads are single or in small groups at the end of the long stalks. The yellow root is large and fleshy, about 6 inches long and an inch or two thick, with lateral rootlets 6 to 12 inches long. It reproduces vegetatively and from seed.



**Habitat:** It grows most often in rich, moist, well-drained calcareous soils and prefers sun-light to partial shade locations. It can be found along roadsides, open woodlands, grasslands, fields, meadows and damp pastures.

**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in OR.



**Ecological Impacts:** It occupies space that desirable indigenous species require and compete for available resources, such as sunlight

**Toxicity:** This plant has been used medicinally but may have toxic effects. Toxicity can vary in a plant according to season, the plant's different parts, and its stage of growth; and plants can absorb toxic substances, such as herbicides, pesticides, and pollutants from the water, air, and soil.

### Control and Management:



- **Manual-** Remove small infestations by hand pulling or digging. Use gloves and remove entire root system. Remove before flower set in spring.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr. Elecampane often occurs in grass/sedge vegetation, which would be harmed collaterally during foliar applications of glyphosate.

Triclopyr-based herbicides, on the other hand, would kill the elecampane but leave the graminoids. Follow label and state requirements.

**References:** [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/list](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/list), <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=INHE>, [www.ann.com.au/herbs/Monographs/inula.htm](http://www.ann.com.au/herbs/Monographs/inula.htm), <http://www.habitas.org.uk/flora/species.asp?item=4394>, [www.plant-identification.co.uk/skye/compositae/inula-helenium.htm](http://www.plant-identification.co.uk/skye/compositae/inula-helenium.htm), [www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/herbhunters/elecampane.html](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/herbhunters/elecampane.html), [www.seedsanctuary.com/herbs/detail.cfm?ID=16](http://www.seedsanctuary.com/herbs/detail.cfm?ID=16), [www.enature.com/fieldguides/detail.asp?recnum=WF1288](http://www.enature.com/fieldguides/detail.asp?recnum=WF1288)