



Wild Caraway (*Carum carvi*)

Provincial Designation:
None but elevated to Noxious in several M.D./Counties

Overview:

Wild caraway is a biennial plant, producing a low growing rosette of leaves in its first year of growth, and then a flowering stalk (bolt) in the second year – it can even bolt and flower a third year before dying. It develops a narrow, parsnip-like taproot with a black skin and white core. This is the same plant that produces the caraway spice used in rye breads and as an ingredient in some liquors. All parts of the plant are edible. Native to Eurasia, it has escaped cultivation as a spice crop in Canada.

Habitat:

Wild caraway grows in a wide variety of soil types, pH, and climates. It will successfully reproduce under deciduous forest canopy but seems intolerant of complete shade. Bolting plants can tolerate some spring flooding and seedlings can survive light frosts.



Identification:

Stems: Stems are erect, branched, and grow 60 to 90 cm tall. There can be several stems per plant.

Leaves: Leaves are alternate and very finely divided (very carrot-like). The leaves of first-year rosettes can be very similar to yarrow, a native plant.

Flowers: Flowers are white, but occasionally pinkish, and occur in groups at the top of stems (compound umbels). Flowers hermaphroditic (having both male & female organs) and therefore self-fertile. Fruits (seeds) are crescent-shaped with ridges, and about 2 mm long.

Prevention:

Wild caraway is very difficult to detect when not in flower. Learn to recognize Wild caraway rosettes – early detection provides the best chances for eradication.

Control:

Grazing: It is not utilized by livestock and can quickly displace nearly all other vegetation



PHOTOS: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

where infestations go uncontrolled. Infestations in forage crops have led to weed seed dispersal in baled hay. *Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.*

Cultivation: Repeated cultivation before seed set are effective. Hand pulling pre-bloom is also effective, especially in soft soils. After flowering the plants are very fragile and seeds are easily scattered – at this stage a plastic bag can be carefully placed over the mature plant, and closed tightly around the stem. Collected seed should be disposed of in landfill-bound garbage or thoroughly burned. Several years' effort is required to deplete the seed bank.

Mechanical: Repeated mowing is not effective, as plants re-bloom below cutting height.

Chemical:¹ Picloram, clopyralid, and 2,4-D Ester are very effective. Plants are easier to control in the rosette stage and before bolting. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date.



Seed heads

¹ Always follow the product labels. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the *Minor Use of Pesticides* regulation constitutes an offence under both the *Federal Pest Control Products Act* and *Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.