

**Common Name:** Orange hawkweed

**Scientific Name** *Hieracium aurantiacum* L.

**Family:** Sunflower family (Asteraceae), Dandelion tribe (Lactuceae)

**Related Species:**

*Hieracium umbellatum* L. Narrow leafed hawkweed native to continent, exotic in Alaska

*Hieracium caespitosum* Dumort. Meadow hawkweed

*Hieracium triste* Willd. Woolly hawkweed, alpine **native**

*Hieracium gracile* Hook. Yukon hawkweed, alpine **native**

*Hieracium canadense* Michx. Canadian hawkweed, **native**

*Hieracium albiflorum* Hook. (white hawkweed) mainland **native**

Related members of the genus all have yellow or white flowers.

**Description:** Deeply colorful orange-red flowers about one inch in diameter. Flower heads are **dark red** on the edges and orange in the center. Flowers consist of ray florets only with notched upper margins. Leaves are 2-6 inches long, clustered in a basal rosette. A few to short leaves on the 6-8 inch long stems or often none at all. Leaves are covered with soft white hairs. Stems are covered with shorter dark colored hairs. Leaves are darker green on the upper surface than the lower surface. Stems 2 to 12 inches, occasionally to two feet. Milky juice produced by leaves and stems. One plant can produce 5-35 flower heads. Can spread by stolons or seed.

**Life History** A perennial like the dandelion, in Alaska hawkweed produces flowers from mid July through

October. When flowers are absent, it can be very inconspicuous. Look for clumps of serrated leaves covered with downy white hairs. Reproduces vegetatively by runners in a manner similar to strawberries or by rhizomes. Flowering stems can produce hundreds of seeds. Seeds may be dispersed by wind, animals and hay. Seeds may also stick to clothing. Seeds can germinate immediately or stay dormant in the soil for up to seven years.

Photo: Tom Heutte USDA Forest Service



**Where Found:** Communities throughout southeast Alaska and Kenai Peninsula. One alarming instance is on Camp Island in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, where orange hawkweed is rapidly expanding with in a native forb/fern meadow on a large scale. Orange hawkweed is native to alpine and hillside meadows in Europe.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained soil, roadside slopes and railway cuttings. Grows in permanent meadows, grasslands, rangelands, and pastures.

**Impacts: Invasive on undisturbed sites!** Capable of forming dense mats of vegetation completely excluding all other plant species. Considered one of the worst nuisance species in landscapes and agriculture. Very tolerant of poor site conditions. Hawkweeds are very competitive with desirable plants. Once introduced into an area, they can quickly form dense patches. If they are not controlled, these patches can expand into large areas and displace desired native and forage species. Hawkweeds are commonly found in lawns and gardens. Because of its ability to outcompete native grasses it is widely suspected of being allelopathic.

**Control Options:** As patches expand in size, they become more difficult to control. Because hawkweeds can establish in remote mountain meadows and forest habitats, new populations sometimes go unnoticed. No single management practice can be implemented just once to manage the hawkweeds. Ultimately, the management of hawkweeds will depend on a program that integrates multiple management procedures such as fertilizers, herbicides and other techniques that increase the competitive ability of desired species.

Similar in its habits to dandelions except it lacks the fleshy taproot. Like with dandelions, intensive hand removal on lawns is more effective if used in conjunction with fertilization, which can help the grass to outgrow the hawkweed. Mowing is ineffective because rosettes

are so close to the ground. For homeowners, a “weed and feed” type fertilizer is a less labor-intensive option. Follow all directions on the label. These fertilizer-herbicide mixes may kill desirable plants if not used according to instructions. Hand removal can be effective if care is taken to remove as much of the root as possible.

**Herbicide Options:** Hawkweed can be controlled with growth-regulator herbicides like 2,4-D. Surfactants increase the adherence of these herbicides to the hairy leaf and stem surfaces of hawkweeds. The herbicide 2,4-D is most effective when applied at 1.5 to 2.0 pounds of active ingredient per acre. Plants should be treated when they are in the rosette stage.

**Fun Facts:** There are two hundred and fifty species of the genus *Hieracium* in Europe. It has been long hated by farmers and gardeners who gave it such fanciful names as “King Devil”, “Devil’s Paintbrush” and “Grim the Collier.”

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