

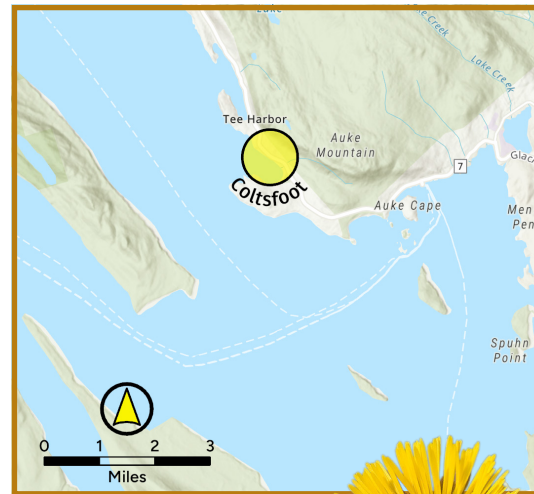
COLTSFOOT

Tussilago farfara



Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) is native to Europe and parts of Asia. Coltsfoot was likely introduced to the United States by early settlers for its medicinal properties. It is also a popular ornamental garden plant. Invasive populations are present throughout the northeast U.S. and, more recently, in the Northwest.

In late September 2023, two Juneau residents contacted SAWC about a strange plant in their neighborhood. We visited the site and identified the plant as coltsfoot. **This is the first known infestation in Alaska.**



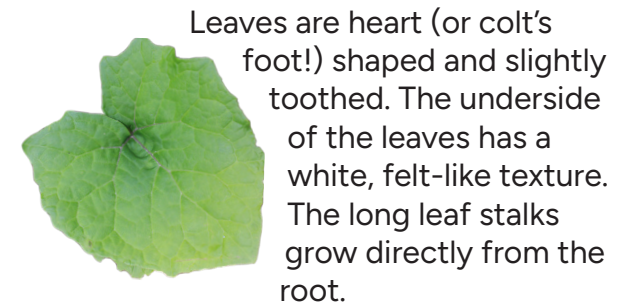
WHERE DOES IT GROW?

Coltsfoot grows in low-lying damp and disturbed edge habitats, such as stream banks and roadsides. It requires moist soil and prefers full sun or mild shade, so it is not usually found in interior forests in its native or invasive range.

IDENTIFICATION

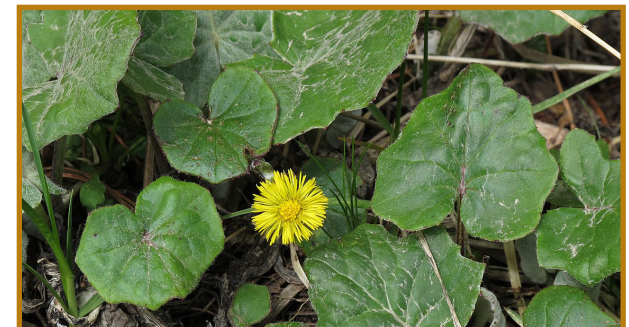


Coltsfoot flowers resemble dandelions but are smaller and have a distinct central "disc". Flower stems are scaly with wooly hairs, and several stems emerge from one root.



Leaves are heart (or colt's foot!) shaped and slightly toothed. The underside of the leaves has a white, felt-like texture. The long leaf stalks grow directly from the root.

Coltsfoot is a perennial herb, living and reproducing over multiple years. It reproduces both by seed and vegetatively through rhizomes. Seeds are dispersed by wind. Unlike many species, the flowers appear before the leaves, early in the spring. In fact, the flowers and leaves are rarely seen at the same time.



WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Coltsfoot is a weed in its native range and is known to be difficult to control in agricultural areas.

It has traits common to invasive plants: it can tolerate a range of environmental conditions, has prolific seed production and germination rates, and can reproduce vegetatively from small pieces of rhizome.

Because coltsfoot establishes quickly in disturbed areas, it can prevent re-establishment of native vegetation. In Washington, coltsfoot colonized areas where knotweed control had been conducted.



FUN FACTS

The genus name *Tussilago* comes from the Latin *tussis*, meaning “to cough”. Coltsfoot is used as an expectorant in its native range.

Tussilago farfara shares a common name with a plant native to Alaska, *Petasites frigidus* –AKA western coltsfoot or Arctic sweet coltsfoot.

Coltsfoot rhizomes can grow to be over three feet long.

Seeds rarely germinate if they’re older than six months, limiting the seed bank.

MANAGEMENT

Prevent spread

Don’t purchase or plant coltsfoot to use as an ornamental. Coltsfoot is considered a “weak competitor”, so a healthy, densely vegetated understory can help prevent coltsfoot from spreading.

Pull by hand

Hand pulling coltsfoot is only appropriate for small infestations. Pull when soil is moist and take care to remove the entire root system to prevent resprouting. Pull flowers before they set seed.

Treat with herbicide

Coltsfoot is resistant to selective herbicides but a 2% glyphosate solution (e.g., Roundup) is effective. Treat in summer or early fall when the leaves are fully developed. **Always follow herbicide label instructions.** Herbicide applications on public lands often require pesticide certification through AK DEC.

Report sightings

If you see this plant, **please report it!** Email photos & location information to reed@sawcak.org or post on iNaturalist.

We can help!

If you would like help managing coltsfoot on your property, contact:

EM Reed
Regional Invasive Plant Coordinator
Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition
reed@sawcak.org
907-500-7171

For more information on coltsfoot and other invasive plants in Southeast Alaska, go to:

bit.ly/SEAKinvasives



Funded by the US Forest Service and Copper River Watershed Project - thank you!

We connect and support local partners across Southeast Alaska to advance community-based watershed stewardship and restoration.



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