

Tumble Mustard

G. Neil Rhodes, Jr., Professor and Extension Weed Management Specialist
Trevor D. Israel, Extension Assistant
 Department of Plant Sciences

Tumble Mustard *Sisymbrium altissimum* L.

Classification and Description

Tumble mustard, also known as tall hedge mustard, Jim Hill mustard, and tall rocket, is a winter annual or biennial member of the Brassicaceae or mustard family. The plant is a native of Europe and can grow up to 4.5 feet tall. Seedlings of the plant form a rosette of deeply lobed leaves that resemble the basal leaves of a mature plant. The mature plant has a fibrous root system that arises from a slender taproot. The stem of a mature plant is singular, erect, and it branches profusely in the upper part of the plant; this gives the plant a very bushy appearance (Fig. 1). Leaves above the basal rosette are alternate, 2 to 6.5 inches long and 0.4 to 1.6 inches wide. Lower leaves are deeply pinnately lobed, and they change gradually upward to linear filiform segments. Flowers have 4 yellow petals 0.25 to 0.4 in long. Seed are contained in 0.2 to 0.4 in long siliques (seed pods) (Fig. 2).

Problems in Pastures and Hay Fields

Tumble mustard germinates in the fall and is common in both established and newly seeded cool-season grass pastures. Competition with grass is worst in new seedings. Although toxicity problems with this weed are very rare, it does contain substances that can cause digestive tract irritation. At maturity, the plant dries, loses its leaves, breaks off at the base, and tumbles with the wind. Numerous calls are received each June from clients describing an odd looking weed that resembles a roll of wire with numerous “stickers” along the stem (Fig. 3). These “stickers” are actually the dried siliques.



Fig. 1. Single stem that branches profusely at the upper part of the plant.



Fig. 3. Tumble mustard resembles a roll of wire or a wire basket.



Fig. 2. Seed pods or “siliques” attached close to the stem.

Management in Pastures and Hay Fields

Producers are encouraged to scout affected pastures in mid-October to look for emergence of this weed. Application of 2,4-D in late October to November or February to March will give effective control of tumble mustard and other common pasture weeds such as hairy buttercup, musk thistle and buckhorn plantain. Prior to application of any herbicide, be sure to thoroughly read and understand the herbicide label, and follow all directions and precautions. Also, remember that practicing good herbicide stewardship is everyone's responsibility. For more information on herbicide stewardship, please visit our website: herbicidestewardship.utk.edu.

References

Bryson, C. T. and M. S. DeFelice, eds. 2009. p. 135 *in* Weeds of the South, Univ. of Georgia Press, Athens, GA 30602. 468 pp.

Picture Credits

Fig. 1. Tumble mustard plant. Clinton Shock. Digital image. Accessed 14 Nov. 2014.

<http://www.malag.aes.oregonstate.edu/wildflowers/images.php/id-2046>

Fig. 2. Tumble mustard siliques. Heath Nokes, Extension Agent, Warren County.

Fig. 3. Tumble mustard. Chris Ramsey, County Extension Director, Sullivan County.

Disclaimer

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