



# Common St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* L.

**Common Name:** St. Johnswort, St. John's wort, common St. Johnswort, Klamath weed, common goatweed, tipton weed

**Native Origin:** Europe, North Africa, and Asia except for the Arctic regions

**Description:** An erect perennial herb in the Mangosteen family (*Clusiaceae*) typically growing 1 – 2.5 feet in height. Reddish stems are single or multiple, smooth, somewhat two-edged, woody at the base, and branching out toward the top of the plant. The narrow, lance shaped leaves are 1 - 2 inches long, stalkless with pointed tips. Each leaf is spotted with tiny translucent dots. Yellow star-like flowers have 5 petals with tiny black dots on the margins. Flowers occur in clusters at the ends of stems with 25 – 100 flowers per cluster. The fruit is a 3-sectioned pod with numerous dark brown seeds. One plant can produce up to 100,000 seeds per year that are viable for ten years. The root system consists of a long taproot with shallow rhizomes extending several inches from the crown. It spreads both by underground rhizomes, above-ground creeping stems, and by seeds that are dispersed by wind and animals.



**Habitat:** It prefers poor, sandy, dry soils and full sun, and can be found primarily in waste areas, railroad right-of-ways, sidewalk cracks, roadsides, meadows, dry pastures, rangelands, fields, open woods, dunes, and disturbed ground. However, it has the capability to invade healthy rangelands.

**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is considered invasive in ID, MI, MO, MT, NY, OR, WA, WI, and WY.

**Ecological Impacts:** This ecologically invasive plant crowds out native species and is toxic to livestock.

**Toxicity:** It contains hypericin, a phototoxin that travels to the skin after ingestion. It is activated by ultraviolet rays responsible for dermatitis, inflammation of the mucus membranes causing itching, swelling, blisters, and open sores in animals.

**Control and Management:** Wear gloves and avoid touching the eyes when collecting. Photosensitivity such second degree blisters could occur to the skin.



- **Manual-** Pull new or small infestation sites. Repeated pulls to remove the whole plant and lateral roots. Do not leave plants at the site, since vegetative growth will occur, and the seed source will remain. Regular tilling is effective where feasible.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as 2,4-D right after germination on new seedlings and before blossoms open. Repeated applications will be necessary. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Biocontrol-** Two foliage beetles, *Chrysolina hyperici* and *C. quadrigemina* were released in California from 1945 to 1946, and established within two years. A root-boring beetle *Agrilus hyperici* and a leaf bud gall-forming midge *Zeuxidiplosis giardi* were released in 1950 to help the *Chrysolina* spp. These established California colonies became the source for collections and distribution to *Hypericum perforatum* infestations throughout the western United States. Recently released and established is the moth *Aplocera plagiata*.

**References:** <http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/map/eucy1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/map/eucy1.htm), [www.forestimages.org](http://www.forestimages.org), Czarapeta, Elizabeth J., *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control*, 2005. p. 110, [www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/stjohnswort.shtml](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/stjohnswort.shtml), [http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed\\_info/Written\\_findings/Hypericum\\_perforatum.html](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_info/Written_findings/Hypericum_perforatum.html)