



OXEYE DAISY

Leucanthemum vulgare



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Why is it a weed?

It outcompetes useful pasture species on beef and dairy farms.

Where is it found?

All over New Zealand primarily in waste areas and roadsides.

Is it toxic?

No.

Alternative uses

It is sometimes used as an ornamental plant. Parts of it are also edible.



MILTON MUNRO

Recently I was lucky enough to spend almost a week on the West Coast of the South Island. Lurking amidst the stunning scenery were a lot of awesome weeds to find and identify. It was weed nirvana! I had so much fun, and this has probably given you all too much of a glimpse into my sad life.

One weed in particular caught my eye. Oxeye daisy is a really contrasting plant. One dairy farmer's paddock will be riddled with it, while on the neighbouring sheep block there's not a plant to be seen.

This perennial weed is found all over New Zealand, but originated in Europe and parts of Asia. It was introduced here as an ornamental but rapidly escaped the confines of the garden.

It's mainly found on roadsides and in waste areas but it's also becoming a real problem on beef and dairy farms. The reason for this problem is that cows will not graze it, leaving it to become a real competitor for ryegrass and clover. Luckily our woolly friends don't mind it at all and

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on some farms sheep will actively seek it out for grazing.

Oxeye daisy looks a bit like the common daisy we are all familiar with, only it's much larger. It starts off as a small flat rosette of dark green oval-lobed leaves. This rosette produces a large number of upright leafy flower stems. The leaves on the stems get smaller as you move up the stem.

It starts flowering in late spring and continues through until early autumn. The large flower (6cm diameter) has a yellow centre and 20-30 narrow white petals. Each flower produces around 250 seeds meaning each plant can produce over 25,000 seeds.

As if this wasn't bad enough, the seeds can enter dormancy and remain viable in the soil for a long time. To add insult to injury, oxeye daisy also grows from a rhizome (underground stem) that can spread the plant even faster.

How to control it

This can be very tricky if you only have cows to graze your paddocks. Its rhizome growth habit means any attempt to pull it out needs to get the entire root or else the plant regenerates.

Mowing is also not effective as the plant regenerates from the energy stores in the rhizome.

Spraying is an option but most pasture

3 things in favour of oxeye daisy

- If it's managed well it is quite a pretty flower and (apparently) it looks nice in an ornamental garden. For the record, this is my wife's opinion – to me it's still a weed and needs to be pulled!
- It's edible. The young leaves can be used as a salad green and the unopened flower buds can be marinated and used in a similar way to capers.
- It's the traditional flower to be used in the whole "He loves me, he loves me not" thing – I can't get enough of these interesting facts!

herbicides are not effective. The best product to use is Preside but this will only be effective on very small plants and may require multiple applications over a few years to achieve good control.

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH A WEED PROBLEM?

If anyone has a request for a particular weed they would like to know more about please don't hesitate to let Milton know: mmunro@pggwrightson.co.nz

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