



# COMMON FENNEL

*Foeniculum vulgare*



Beki Shoemaker  
Pierce Co. Noxious Weed Control Board

- \* Other names: Fennel, Frances Fennel, Sweet Fennel
- \* Common Fennel is a Class B Designate weed.
- \* A large aromatic perennial herb in the Apiaceae Family. Common Fennel spreads by seed and from vegetative buds.
- \* This licorice scented Mediterranean herb grows to a height of 4 to 10 feet tall. It has featherlike dark green or bronze leaves, and umbrella shaped clusters of tiny yellow flowers. It blooms from May to September. Foliage, stem roots and seeds are hairless and all have a very strong licorice scent.
- \* Mature fennel plants are difficult to remove due to the

large tap roots which can reach depths of up to 10 feet. The plant can reestablish itself from small pieces of roots or bulbs. Bulbing fennel, (also known as Florence fennel, *F. vulgare azoricum*) does not pose a threat and is not an invasive problem, or listed as a noxious weed in Washington or Pierce County.

- \* Common fennel forms dense infestations, out-competes native plants and reduces native wildlife habitat. It poses a serious threat to Washington's native grasslands. Once established it is difficult to control, due to its strong competitive abilities and persistent seed bank.
- \* It is found in disturbed sites such as roadsides, embankments, and vacant lots. It also colonizes easily in grasslands and along waterways, wetlands, and streams.

## CONTROL OPTIONS

- \* When growing fennel, purchase only non-invasive, annual varieties of fennel. Also, be very careful when removing plants that have mature seed. Clip and bag the seed heads before cutting the plants, otherwise, the problem could be made worse by spreading seeds into other areas. Fennel germinates rapidly if the plants were allowed to seed in past seasons.



Beki Shoemaker  
Pierce Co. Noxious Weed Control Board



- ✦ Small seedlings can be hand pulled. Mature fennel plants are more difficult to remove due to the long taproots. If the root breaks, remove the upper 3 to 6 inches. Cutting the root before the plant sets seeds reduces the number of re-sprouts. Cutting will not control common fennel unless it is done numerous times throughout the growing season prior to seed set and for at least 4 successive seasons. Mowing too early encourages numerous sprouts as well
- ✦ Spot applications of herbicides containing *glyphosate* (as in Roundup Pro) can be effective in controlling common fennel. Apply when plants are actively growing and before they develop blooming stalks, usually before June.
- ✦ When using herbicides, read and follow all label instructions and obey all label precautions. (Note: pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.)

