

AN ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IS HAPPENING IN OXFORDSHIRE

The yellow ragwort is the most common cause of poisoning of livestock in Britain. Animal lovers will be horrified to hear that ragwort is deadly poisonous both when it is growing and also when dry in hay. A pony dies after eating as little as 2lbs. The toxins affect the liver and the pony dies a horribly painful death. There is no cure. Not only is the plant spreading at an alarming rate across our common and open spaces, it is smothering and killing rare wild flowers such as the green winged orchid and the delicate harebell. Once we lose these wild flowers they will never return.

As ragwort is such an injurious weed, it is specified under the 1959 Weeds Act. The ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Fisheries has powers to serve clearance notices on landowners that allow the plant to grow. Ragwort is easy to recognise. In the spring it produces a rosette of dark green leaves with irregular and ragged edges and it then grows into an upright plant as tall as 3 feet with a woody stem slightly red at the base. In July the plant produces a large head of flowers with daisy-like petals in bright yellow. This prolific plant produces up to 150,000 seeds a year of which 70% will germinate.

The best method of clearing ragwort is to spray the area during late April / early May with a herbicide but this is environmentally unacceptable in most places. However, the plant does pull up very easily once the flower head appears and this proves an equally effective method of clearing it. Clearance must be done before it has a chance to seed. All plants pulled up must be put into bags and ideally incinerated to prevent the seeds germinating again. Always remember to wear gloves when doing this.

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What we need is for everyone to work together in the county to clear this toxic weed. Private land, open spaces, nature reserves, roadside verges and gardens all need to be checked thoroughly this summer and cleared of ragwort.

This is a project that anyone can help with, whether it is advising us of areas you have found or simply pulling up the plants as you find them while out walking. To do that all you will need is a bag to put the plant into. It's as simple as that!

The British Horse Society is organising a major ragwort clearance programme across Oxfordshire this summer. We welcome everyone who has read this article to join us. If you want to safeguard the environment for future generations and care about the welfare of animals please join our campaign and become involved in this project.

**For advice, leaflets, or to offer help please contact the
BHS welfare officer, Miss D M Harris on 01993 702844.**

Golden Wedding



Many congratulations to **Horst and Ruby Mix** who celebrated their Golden Wedding on the 8th July with a family party.

They met and married in Scotland where their two sons Hans and Wolfgang were born. In 1960 they moved southwards, finishing up in Shipton in 1970, where Horst worked for Bob Barratt.

Ruby and Horst have contributed freely of their time to support the village over the years and are always willing to help. Their hard work is much appreciated. We thank them and send our warmest wishes on this happy occasion.