

curly dock

Rumex crispus

Identification:

Polygonaceae (Smartweed family)

Common Perennial forb

Height: 24-60' **Width:** 18"

Leaf Arrangement: alternate

Flower: Green, Maroon, Yellow

Blooms: Mid-summer

Fruit: Fluffy

Fall Color: Green

Curly dock is a biennial species, first-year plants often sprawl out in a prostrate form, much like a large dandelion. Second-year plants stand erect, usually about 3' tall, but can grow up to five feet tall. Leaves are lance-shaped, with a rounded tip and curly or wavy margins. They are alternately arranged on the stem and are sometimes tinged with red. As a typical member of the buckwheat family, curly dock has a membranous sheath at its leaf base and swollen stem joints. Tiny yellowish-green flower form into large, vertical clusters at the top of the flower stalks. These eventually develop into three-winged seeds, turning a distinctive rusty brown at maturity.



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AKA: yellow dock, sour dock



Description & Impact:

This European species was first observed in the United States in 1748. Curly dock is a perennial forb that is common in moist areas, cultivated croplands, degraded wetlands and pastures. Just one of these stout plants can produce 40,000 seeds each year. These seeds can persist in the soil and remain viable for several decades, making it a persistent pest in disturbed areas. Caterpillars of some moth and butterfly species eat the foliage, while various game birds and white-footed mice eat the seeds.

Control Methods:

Manual Control: Cut the root several inches below the soil surface with a Parsnip Predator or sharpened spade and pull entire plant out by hand. A dandelion digging tool or weeding tool will be effective for removing small plants.

Mowing or cutting can be useful to suppress large populations if timed correctly. Flowering should be down shortly after flowering begins, well-before seeds develop. A second mowing will likely be needed to control resprouting plants. If seeds have already developed, clip the entire seed head and remove from site.

Chemical: During the rosette stage, young curly dock plants can be killed with a foliar spray of glyphosate solution (Roundup®, etc.). If native grasses are present on site, a broadleaf specific herbicide containing aminopyralid (Milestone®) would be an effective alternative. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Citations: https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/weeds/plants/curly_dock.htm