

# Common Fennel:

## A Growing Problem

### What is it?

Common Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a very large perennial herb native to the Mediterranean that grows from 4 to 10 feet tall. It has feathery dark green to bronzy leaves and flat topped umbrella shaped clusters of yellow flowers. Common fennel blooms from July to September, producing large numbers of seeds. The seed, foliage, stems and roots all have a strong licorice scent.



### Why is it a threat?

- Readily escapes cultivation. Invades and colonizes natural areas, roadsides, vacant areas, grasslands, wetlands, riparian areas and coastal estuaries.
- Produces large numbers of seeds. A single one year old plant can produce thousands of seeds in its first year, and over 100,000 seeds on mature plants. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for many years.
- Seeds are spread by machinery, vehicles, contaminated soil and compost, animals, clothing and water. Common fennel can also spread from pieces of root crown. Huge tap root can grow to 10 feet long.
- Forms dense infestations, crowding and shading out plants that are critical for native wildlife habitat.

### What can you do?



Don't plant it. Choose alternatives: "Florence fennel" is an annual bulbing variety that is not invasive.



Remove plants from your yard and garden. Bag them and take to a waste and recovery center. *Please do not put into compost or yard waste recycling.*



Learn to recognize escaped plants and report them to the Noxious Weed Control staff.



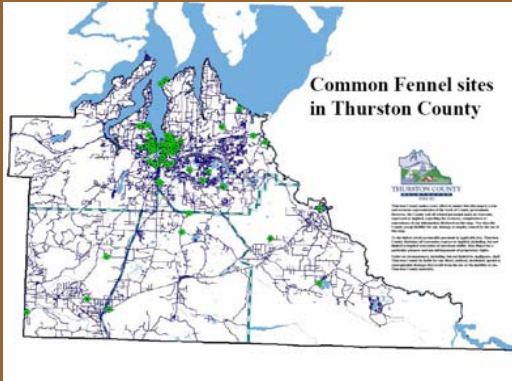
Large, woody tap roots make manual removal difficult. Plants can regenerate from pieces of root crown left in the soil, and new plants can start if pieces are moved from one site to another. Literature indicates that Common fennel has compounds in its roots that can inhibit the growth of other plants (allelopathy).



One mature plant can produce more than 10,000 seeds in its first blooming season, and mature plants produce in excess of 100,000 seeds per year. Seed can be spread many different ways, by machinery, clothing, animals, contaminated soil, compost or yard waste, by vehicles or water. Seed can lay dormant in the soil for many years, establishing large seed banks.



Escaped common fennel has been found in many places in Thurston County and Western Washington: along roadsides, vacant lots and shorelines, steep embankments, estuaries, grasslands and stream-banks, from urban parking lots to pastures. Fennel can adapt to a wide range of growing conditions, out-competing native and more desirable plant communities.



### Common Fennel Alternatives

Dill ( <i>Aristicum graveolens</i> )	Florence Fennel, Fennel ( <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> "Aristicum")	
Anise ( <i>Phoenicium anisum</i> )	Anise Hyacinth ( <i>Agastache foeniculum</i> )	Sweet Cicely ( <i>Dymalis odorata</i> )



Though fennel is not toxic to livestock, infestations can seriously reduce quality forage production. Livestock can actually cause infestations to become more serious and wide spread through soil disturbance and further spread of seed. Seed commonly sticks to muddy hooves and furry coats. Birds and rodents can spread seed as well.