

## Yellow Blooms in Spring



The rain showers have delayed planting for the farmers in most areas. This has given all of us time to admire the colorful blooms in the fields for the past few weeks. First the fields were mostly purple thanks to Purple Deadnettle (*Lamium purpureum*). Now it seems that the color palette has changed to shades of yellow.

Apart from the Dandelion, probably the first yellow spring flower along the roads is Winter Cress (*Barbarea vulgaris*), also known as Yellow Rocket plant. This plant is a member of the Mustard family (but is not a true Mustard), which means that like all Mustard species, it has a distinctive 4 petals on each flower. It likes growing in disturbed areas and along paths. Winter Cress often has uniquely shaped leaves that clasp the stem. But the easiest way to identify this plant is by its clusters of light-yellow flowers with 4 petals, each on a mini stalk at the end of a main stalk. It is one of the first green “deer foods” in the spring.

Another weed that is currently gracing landscapes and farm fields has a bloom that is canary yellow. Cressleaf groundsel (*Packera glabella*), which is also known as Butterweed, is a member of the Aster family, thus the weed sports flowers that are daisy-like and seed heads that look like miniature dandelion puffballs. The flowers are borne at the ends of thick, erect, stems that are green with reddish-purple streaks. The plant’s “cress-like” leaves are responsible for the common name. Cressleaf groundsel is a native winter annual. It is a heavy seed producer, and the seed can remain viable in the soil for a number of years.

Another yellow spring blooming plant that is a member of the Aster family is Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*). One way to distinguish this plant from Butterweed is its thinner stem. Another identifying mark is the smaller sparse leaves. It will have larger leaves at the base of the plant, though these may be hidden in grass. The whole plant has a delicate appearance. This is a plant of wet habitats and often grows in dense colonies. The blooming period is April through July.

All three of these spring blooming plants attract insects. Winter Cress is eaten by animals, but both Butterweed and Golden Ragwort are somewhat toxic and are avoided by many creatures.

What is a weed? According to the authors of **Garden-pedia an A-to-Z Guide to Gardening Terms**, “A weed is an undesirable plant; or a plant that is out of place depending on your point of view.” There are many wildflowers that sometimes get labeled “weeds” by many gardeners. I have to admit that I eliminate all Winter Cress and Butterweed in my landscape but would love to add some Golden Ragwort to an area down by the creek.

Remember that knowing a weed’s name lets you research its life cycle and learn to outsmart it in the best way at the right time.

Tune in on **Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.** to view **The Southern Ohio Farm Show**, a new program offered by the OSUE offices from Brown, Clermont, and Highland Counties. The program will include a market update, weather forecast, and each episode will include a feature topic. The Southern Ohio Farm Show will be broadcasted through Zoom. Register for the program at <https://go.osu.edu/thesouthernohiofarmshowregistration>.

Due to a scheduling conflict we needed to change our **Zoom Garden Seminar to Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.** Jim Jasinski, OSUE IPM Program Coordinator, will talk about Integrated Pest Management. **Registration is required and the registration information will be posted on OSUE Brown County’s Website and Facebook page.**

Remember in this time of events being cancelled, limited gatherings, and constant disinfecting; Gardening has NOT been cancelled! Garden on!