



## Weed of the Month: Skeletonweed

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, where we highlight a different noxious invasive weed each month to raise awareness about their impact on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*), a highly problematic species that poses a threat to natural ecosystems and agriculture.

### Identification:

Skeletonweed (also known as rush skeletonweed, gum succory, devil's grass, and nakedweed) is a perennial herbaceous plant with a distinctive appearance. Stems are generally smooth and slender, with downward hairs covering the basal stem. Its leaves are narrow and sparse, causing the stems to resemble the ribs of a skeleton. In late spring and early summer, it produces yellow, daisy-like flowers at the ends of its stems.



Left- Flower of Skeletonweed; Size ranges around 1/2 inch in diameter

Right - Full body of Skeletonweed in blooming stage



### Invasive Behavior:

Originating from the Transcaspian region of Eurasia, Skeletonweed has become a serious invasive species in many parts of the world. It thrives in disturbed habitats, such as roadsides, croplands, especially irrigated grain fields, semi-arid pastures, rangelands, and residential properties. Its ability to produce large quantities of wind-dispersed seeds, coupled with its aggressive root system, allows it to quickly colonize and outcompete native vegetation.



Left- Seeds of Skeletonweed

Right - Example of seeds and flowers on the stems of Skeletonweed





**Impact:**

The presence of Skeletonweed can have detrimental effects on both natural ecosystems and agriculture. It competes with native plants for resources, reducing biodiversity and disrupting ecosystem balance. Rangeland infestations displace native and beneficial forage species grazed by livestock and wildlife. In agricultural settings, Skeletonweed can reduce crop yields and quality, leading to economic losses for farmers.

**Control and Management:**

Controlling Skeletonweed requires a multifaceted approach. Early detection and rapid response are crucial. Mechanical methods, such as mowing or hand-pulling, can be effective for small infestations. Herbicides may be necessary for larger or more established populations, but should be used with caution to minimize harm to non-target species.

Left- Rosette form of young Skeletonweed

Right - Downward hairs of Skeletonweed's basal stem



**Prevention:**

Preventing the spread of Skeletonweed is key to its management. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at **(530) 822-7500**. Currently, this weed has been spotted east of Highway 70 and county staff are working to eradicate the infestation.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Skeletonweed and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Skeletonweed, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at:

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/chondrilla-junceae-profile/>

For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural and!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office

