



## A Northern Nevada Homeowner's Guide to Identifying and Managing Redroot Pigweed

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**Other common names:** Rough pigweed, redroot amaranth, careless weed

**Scientific name:** *Amaranthus retroflexus*

**Family:** Amaranthaceae

**Description:** Redroot pigweed grows into a 2- to 6-foot tall plant during the heat of summer. This weed is a common cause of late-summer allergies.

**Leaves:** Lower leaves are oval and upper leaves are more lance-shaped. The leaves have long stalks that are usually hairy on the edges, and prominent veins.

**Stems:** The stems are stout. Upper stems are hairy. Lower stems may be reddish in color or may have a red stripe.

**Flowers:** Flowers are green in color and occur in branched spike-like arrangements. They are very small, and rarely noticed. The clusters of flowers have stiff spines, making them bristly and unpleasant to touch. Blooms from summer to fall.

**Fruit:** The tiny seeds are shiny and black in color.

**Roots:** A pinkish to red deep, thick taproot.

**Native to:** United States, Canada and Mexico

**Where it grows:** Roadsides, vacant lots, gardens, landscaped areas and other disturbed or unmanaged sites

**Life cycle:** Summer annual (sprouts in spring and summer)

**Reproduction:** Reproduces by seed



Typical plant growing in disturbed site.

(Photo by S. Donaldson)



Seedlings have reddish stems.

(Photo by W. Hanson Mazet)

**Control methods:** Pigweed is easy to control mechanically when young, since the taproot is relatively shallow. Once mature, it is difficult to control, and will regrow if cut or mowed.

**Mechanical:** Dig, hoe or pull young seedlings. Use mechanical control methods prior to formation of flowers and seeds. Mowing causes plants to flower close to the ground. Thick layers of mulch may help control seedlings.

**Cultural:** Minimize disturbance to the soil, as this favors germination of pigweed. Plant desirable vegetation that competes with the weed.

**Biological:** Can be grazed, but the plant is reported to be toxic to livestock.

**Chemical:** Apply broadleaf-selective herbicides such as 2,4-D on the leaves of young plants. Pre-emergence herbicides can be used to manage existing seed banks.

## References:

- DiTomaso, J.M. and E.A. Healy. 2007. Weeds of California and Other Western States. University of California Publication 3488.
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- UC IPM. 2010. Redroot Pigweed, [http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/WEEDS/redroot\\_pigweed.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/WEEDS/redroot_pigweed.html).
- Whitson, Tom D. (editor). 2002. Weeds of the West. University of Wyoming, Jackson, Wyoming.



The leaves have long stalks and obvious veins.



Flowers are small and green, and occur on a branched spike.



The taproot and lower stems are pinkish to red in color.

(Above 3 photos by S. Donaldson)