

Careless Weed

(*Amaranthus palmeri*)

Careless weed is a common weed found throughout the eastern US and the southern half of the western US. Careless weed (also known as Palmers Amaranth) looks very similar to other members of the pigweed genus, *Amaranthus*. Careless weed is an “annual” plant, meaning it dies off in the winter and will need to start from seed the following year. It can grow up to ten feet tall in the southern climates where the growing season is longer.

Careless weed is a nuisance weed and a threat to agriculture due to its fast growth rate (far out-pacing the growth rate of crops) and its ability to develop resistance to herbicides. A single plant can produce up to 500,000 seeds! The flowers of Careless weed are found on a tall, single spike (called a panicle) emerging from the center top of the plant. Thousands of small, inconspicuous flowers produce very large amounts of pollen.

Careless weed flowers in mid- summer and fall, depending on the latitude and temperature gradient of the specific geography. Careless weed pollen, like the rest of the members of the genus *Amaranthus*, is considered a severe allergen. Studies in the US and Mexico have shown a positive skin test response rate to Careless weed of between 27 – 44% of allergic patients.

