

Short Ragweed

(*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)

Short (aka Annual or Common) Ragweed is perhaps the most famous of all allergy plants – and for good reason. According to the USDA, Short Ragweed has been confirmed in every US state with the exception of Alaska. Short Ragweed is a summer annual (meaning it will return year after year if left alone) plant that grows up to about six feet tall. The tops of the leaves are green and hairy, with white hairs on the underside. Short Ragweed is most common in disturbed areas – it loves to follow where humans have disrupted the normal plants of an environment. Thus you will find Ragweed along roads and trails, in and around vacant lots and construction sites – any area where the ground has been disturbed and the seeds have a chance to land and germinate. You will not see ragweed just popping up in the middle of a well-maintained lawn, for instance. But till up a swath in the middle of that lawn and in time you will likely see Ragweed try and take hold.

Ragweed pollen is a severe allergen – as little as 10 pollen grains per cubic meter can cause problems in an allergic individual. Pollination occurs from mid-summer until the first frost and/or late fall, and a single plant can produce over 1 billion pollen grains throughout the entire pollen season! Pollen counts over 200 grains per cubic meter have been reported. Ragweed pollen dispersal begins early in the morning, and usually dies off by midday, but the pollen has been known to travel great distances under the right conditions, even from Hungary to Denmark, over 600 miles!

To minimize exposure, try to avoid being outside for long intervals in the mornings or on windy days during the season when Ragweed is actively pollinating.

