



# Whatcom Weeds

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## COMMON PURSLANE

*Portulaca oleracea*

**THREAT:** Common purslane is a prostrate, succulent plant. Purslane is probable originally native to southern Europe or Asia, but is now found nearly worldwide. It was first recorded in Massachusetts in 1672. Purslane produces large amounts of seed (a single plant can produce up to 240,000 seeds) and the seeds are viable in the soil for up to 40 years. Purslane can also reproduce from plant fragments. The succulent stems can remain moist and viable for several days after cultivation. It often invades gardens, lawns, orchards and ornamental plantings, although it is not shade tolerant. Strains of purslane have developed resistance to some herbicides (atrazine and linuron).

**DESCRIPTION:** Common purslane is a summer annual. It grows along the ground, forming mats. The reddish or flesh-colored stems grow out from a central rooting area, like the spokes of a wheel. Stems often grow up to 12 inches in length and may root at the nodes. Leaves are succulent, oval, smooth and shiny, growing from ½ to 2 inches in length. They are green on the top and pale purple underneath. The small, five-petaled yellow flowers open only in sunlight. Flowering can begin one month after germination. The tiny oval seeds are reddish-brown to black in color. Purslane has been used as a salad plant and potherb, as well as for medicinal purposes.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** As with all weeds, prevention is the best management tool. Once established, purslane can be difficult to control due to its prolific seed production. It can be controlled through the use of mulches and small infestations can be controlled through hand weeding (pulled plants should not be left where they can resprout; seeds may also ripen after a plant is pulled). Cultivation is generally ineffective and can serve to spread the infestation. Chemical control can also be used to control purslane. Contact the weed board for site-specific recommendations.

