



Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*)

Scientific name & Code: *Senecio madagascariensis* Poir., SEMA15

Synonyms - none

Family: Asteraceae – Aster Family

Duration/Growth Habit: Annual/Biennial Forb

Common names: English – Madagascar ragwort, fireweed, Madagascar fireweed, variable groundsel

Origin: South Africa

Description: An erect hairless forb 10-70 cm high. Stems erect, slender, 10-70 arising from the crown, 10-50 cm high, branching above. Leaves bright green, alternate, variable shape (may be lobed or serrate), narrow and fleshy, 2-6 cm long, broader leaf bases clasped around the stem. Flowers bright yellow with 13 ray flowers oblong to obovate, 10 mm long and numerous tubular disc flowers grouped into heads of 15-20 mm diameter, each with a green involucre of 20-21 bracts. Seeds (achenes) brownish, cylindrical, 1.5-3 mm long covered with lines of short hairs crowned by a pappus of silky hairs.

Propagation: Seed us spread by wind, birds, animals, humans, and transfer of cinder or soil. Spreads locally by rooting from nodes.

Distribution: Identified in Hawaii (Hawai'i, Kaho'olawe, Kaua'i, Lana'i, Maui, O'ahu)

Habitat/Ecology: Grows on subhumid to humid tropical woodlands, pastures, roadsides, and disturbed sites on a wide range of soils. Spreads rapidly and readily colonizes burnt-out areas.

Environmental impact: Toxic to cattle and horses. Displaces grasses and retains toxins even after drying. Can cause spontaneous combustion in alfalfa hay.

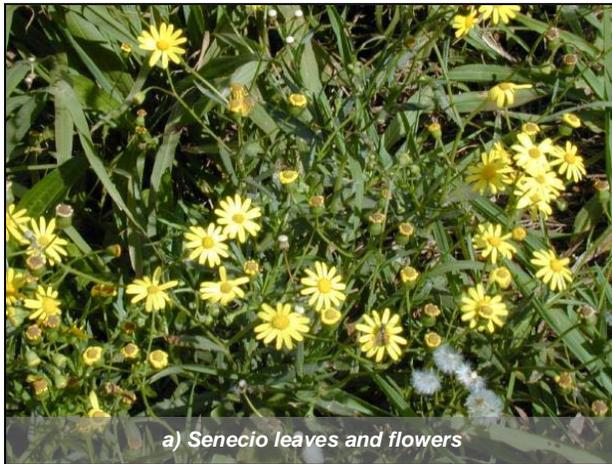
Management: Physical – Resting pastures can reduce infestations. Hand-pulling may be ineffective due to rooting capability of nodes. Can be killed by fire but recruits abundantly in burnt areas after rain.

Chemical – Very susceptible to 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPA, metsulfuron, and triclopyr when young and succulent. Susceptible to glyphosate with wipe-on applicators (to avoid injury to pasture grasses). Mature ragwort is susceptible to foliar applications of MCPA and tebuthiuron.

Biological – Can be controlled with targeted grazing by sheep and goats but too much in the diet causes illness and death. A Madagascar moth (*Secusio extensa*) appears to be a highly specific and a voracious feeder of ragwort.

PIER Risk Assessment: High Risk, score: 23

Fireweed - *Senecio madagascariensis*



a) *Senecio* leaves and flowers



b) Roadside infestation of *Senecio*



c) Close-up of *Senecio* flower heads



d) Pasture infested by *Senecio*



e) *Senecio* seeds on the flower head

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