

Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) & Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*)



A mature Russian thistle plant
Note its rounded shape for easy rolling once it breaks from its base.

Kochia and Russian thistle are the most common annual weeds on roadsides, pasture and farmland of eastern Colorado. These two members of the chenopodiaceae, or goosefoot family, typically germinate in March and April, then flower and set seed from July to October. At maturity these plants break off at the base and become tumbleweeds. Kochia and Russian thistle are often the first weeds to appear on disturbed sites and areas with high soil nitrate content around corrals and barns. Both plants are prolific seed producers, with seed that remains viable in the soil for 2-3 years.



Kochia and Russian thistle "tumble weeds"
gathered at a barbed wire fence.

The most effective herbicides for controlling kochia are dicamba (Banvel, Vanquish, Clarity) and Vista. 2,4-D works best for controlling Russian thistle. For control of both species apply a combination of dicamba and 2,4-D. This pre-mix is available under numerous brand names such as Outlaw, Rangestar, Veteran 720, Weedmaster, and others.

No insect biocontrol agents are available for control of these 2 species. These plants are palatable to livestock when green and grazing can provide suppression, though not control.

Tillage or hand pulling is effective for controlling these annuals. Mowing is only a temporary solution, as kochia and Russian thistle will quickly re-grow, often in a stand more dense and uniform than prior to mowing.

