Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) is widespread throughout North America and is found in most parts of the world. It is seen commonly in meadows, along fence rows, and in waste places growing on thin topsoil where more desirable plants do not survive. In the U. S., it is known also as milfoil, bloodwort, and thousand-leaf. Seldom does it grow in cultivated fields.

This species is perennial and reproduces by underground rootstocks and seeds. Branching underground, the taproot system sends out lateral runners. Each runner may produce several stems from its crown at ground level. Livestock seem to avoid the plant; it has an offensive odor and a bitter taste. Historically, it was used by Achilles to cure his wounds, hence the generic name Achillea.

Stems, branched at the top, grow from 1 to 2 feet tall. They grow erect and are covered with many grayish-green hairs. Leaves are finely divided and fern-like. They are covered with soft, fuzzy hair. Leaves near the base of the plant are longer than those near the stem tips. They range from 1 to 10 inches long and sprout alternately from the stem.

Flower heads can be seen easily from a distance. Each head is composed of 5 to 10 white ray flowers and yellow disk flowers. These flowers form a flat-topped cluster at the top of the branched stems. The clusters range from 1 to 4 inches in diameter. In the South, yarrow blooms in June, and in more northern sites it flowers in September. Typically, but not frequently, pink flowers are produced.

More than 200 white or gray seeds may be produced by one head of clustered flowers. The tiny, oblong seeds are flattened and slightly curved.

Yarrow is little affected by 2,4-D or hormone chemicals, and large scale control may be difficult. In lawns, repeated applications of 2,4-D will control this weed, and its tough rootstocks can be pulled when lawns are wet and soft. Silvex or dicamba give some control when applied at 1 to 1 1/2 lbs. per acre.

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