

Ladysthumb

Persicaria longiseta



Quick Facts: Ladysthumb (*Persicaria longiseta*) - also known as Oriental Ladysthumb or Low Smartweed - is a species of Smartweed native to Asia. It shares a common name with another non-native smartweed, *P. maculosa*, but *P. longiseta* is often more problematic in agricultural and restoration contexts. It is an annual plant that can form dense stands, outcompeting native plants. Many Smartweed species are considered weeds, and they decrease yield of field crops like soybean and sugar beet, while also playing host to crop pests like soybean cyst nematode. Ladysthumb grows in full sun to full shade and prefers wet to moist poorly drained soils. It can be found growing in open and disturbed areas like roadsides, yards, old fields, and wet areas.

Invasion Strategy: Ladysthumb reproduces via seed. Seeds can pass intact through digestive tracts and are primarily spread by the wildlife that consume them. Ladysthumb seeds have moderate longevity in the seed bank, and some seeds can survive for up to 30 years in the soil. This can make eradicating large, established patches more difficult.

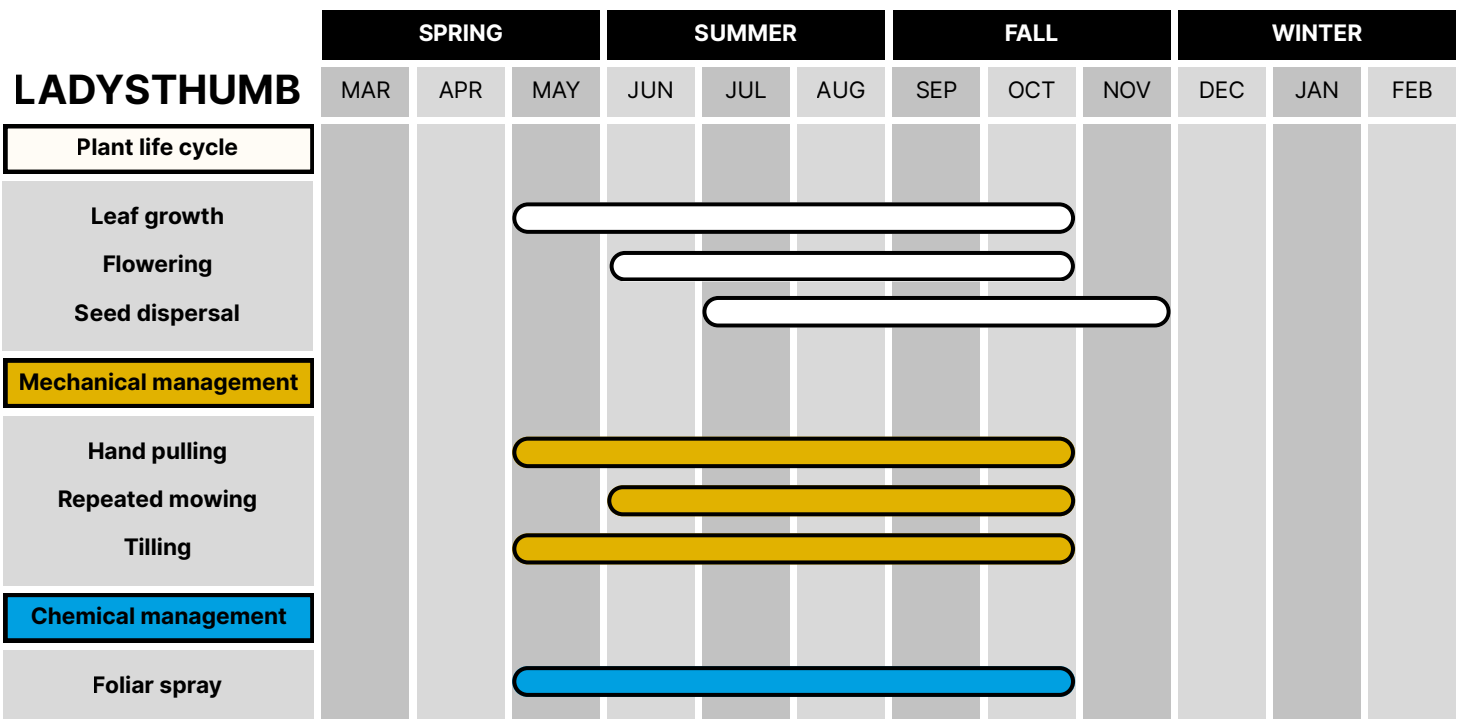
Identifying Features: Ladysthumb grows up to 3 feet tall. Stems can grow upright or horizontally along the ground.

- Stems are green to reddish in color and can be swollen at the leaf nodes.
- Leaves are arranged alternately along the stem.
- Leaves are smooth-margined and lanceolate in shape, tapering at the base and at the tip.
- Leaf sheaths have long bristled and mature leaves sometimes have short, flat hairs on their surface.
- Upper leaf surfaces sometimes have a darker green chevron-shaped patch that resembles a thumbprint.
- Flowers occur in 1-inch clusters at the end of stems.
- Individual flowers are very small and pink in color.
- Long bristles occur at the base of each flower. This is an important character for distinguishing Ladysthumb from other smartweed species.
- Flowers develop into shiny, smooth black seeds that are 0.1 inch wide and sometimes three-sided.

There are also several native smartweed species that are important food sources for waterfowl and other birds, such as Pennsylvania Smartweed (*Persicaria pennsylvanica*) and Water Smartweed (*P. punctatum*). It is important to properly identify Smartweeds before controlling them.

[Further
Information
and
References](#)





This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 6. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

Management methods:

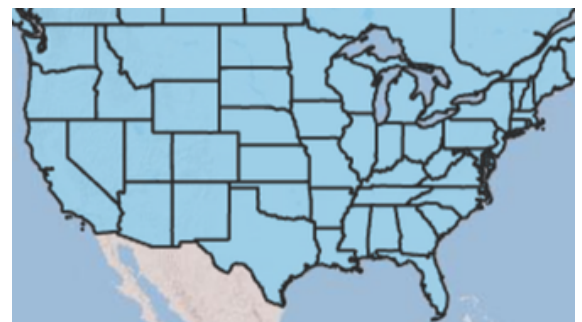
Mechanical - Small infestations can be pulled by hand. Larger patches can be managed with repeated mowing every few weeks throughout the growing season, once plants reach an adequate height. Repeated cultivation (tilling) is also an option for management. It is important to start any management activity early in the season, before plants set seed.

Chemical - Foliar sprays of pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides can be effective treatment options. Like with mechanical methods, it is important to start chemical control before plants produce seed.

Disclaimer - Selecting the best management method for this plant can be site and context specific. Check with your local USDA Service Center or University Extension agent to explore your options and determine what is most appropriate for your location and situation.

Management Information: After mowing or tilling, clean equipment to avoid transporting seeds off site. When hand pulling, dispose of uprooted plants where they cannot spread seeds.

Personal protective equipment is recommended when removing any invasive species, and especially when using herbicides. Always follow label instructions when using herbicide.



■ Species present ■ Absent

Look-Alike Species:

- Pennsylvania Smartweed, *Persicaria pensylvanica* (Supplemental photos 1 and 2).
- Pennsylvania Smartweed is a native species that resembles Ladysthumb. It is an important food source for birds. However, when it interferes with crop production or becomes competitive, it can be controlled similarly to Ladysthumb. It is differentiated by slightly longer leaf stalks, flower and leaf sheaths that lack the bristles present on low smartweed, and the presence of glands on the stalk below the flowers.



Look-Alike Species:

- Oriental Ladysthumb, *Persicaria maculosa* (supplemental photos 3 and 4).
- Confusingly, this invasive Smartweed shares a common name with Ladysthumb. Both species are interchangeably referred to as Ladysthumb or Oriental Ladysthumb. *P. maculosa* is very similar to *P. longiseta*, but the two species can be differentiated by the length of the bristles below the flowers. *P. longiseta* has much longer bristles than *P. maculosa*. Both species are non-native and can be managed similarly. *P. longiseta* generally has wider leaves than *P. maculosa*.



References and Additional Reading:

- Knox County CISMA. 2019. [Invasive species of the month: Oriental Lady's Thumb](#). [Identification and chemical management information].
- Illinois Wildflowers. [Creeping smartweed](#). [Identification and lookalike species information].
- Michigan State University. [Smartweeds](#). [Crop productivity, lifecycle, and mechanical management information].
- SARE Handbook series. 2021. [Manage Weeds on Your Farm: A Guide to Ecological Strategies](#). [Lookalike species, identification, and mechanical management information].
- Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council. 2024. [Ladysthumb fact sheet](#). [Crop pest host information].
- SESVanderHave. [Beet Cyst Nematode Technical Leaflet](#). [Crop pest host information].

Photo Credits: Photo 1: iNaturalist, Scott Harris; Photo 2: Illinois wildflowers; Photo 3: iNaturalist, Sarah Rall; Photo 4: iNaturalist, Andrew Garn; Range map: USDA PLANTS Database; Supplemental photo 1: iNaturalist, Douglas Goldman; Supplemental photo 2: iNaturalist, Misha Zitser. Supplemental photo 3: iNaturalist, Jakob Fahr. Supplemental photo 4: iNaturalist, Sandy Wolkenberg.

Resources:

- Find your local [University Extension Program](#)
- Find your local [USDA NRCS Service Center](#)
- Find your local [Soil and Water Conservation District](#)
- Check out other [invasive plant fact sheets](#)

Acknowledgements:

Fact sheets created by Sophia Sorboro, Ella Stroh, Kaleigh Obrock, and Amber Barnes with edits provided by Ohio NRCS, Indiana NRCS, and Indiana DNR.