

Common St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

POISONOUS

Description

Erect perennial that grows to 1.2 m tall, with rhizomes. Reddish stems are single or multiple, smooth, somewhat two-edged, woody at the base, and branching out toward the top of the plant. Leaves opposite, elliptic-oblong to linear, 1-3 cm long, stalkless, flat, hairless, green, 3- to 5-veined from the base, dotted with numerous, tiny translucent glands that are visible when a leaf is held up to the light. Edges of leaf lower surfaces lined with elevated black glands. Bright yellow flowers, ~ 2 cm in diameter, clustered at the stem tips. Petals 5, separate, 8-12 mm long, typically dotted with black glands along the margins. Plants typically do not flower the first year. Capsules 3-chambered, ovate, not lobed, sticky-glandular, 5-

10 mm long, with persistent styles 3-10 mm long, open longitudinally to release seed. Seed shiny black to brown, nearly cylindrical, ~ 1 mm long, densely pitted, often coated with gelatinous material from the capsule that aids dispersal and may inhibit germination until it breaks down or leaches out in about 4-6 months.

Foliage contains hypericin, a fluorescent red pigment that is toxic to livestock when consumed in quantity, especially to animals with light-colored skin. Used in herbal medicine, hypericin is the antidepressant ingredient in St. John's-wort remedies.

Key Identifiers

- ✓ Opposite elliptic-oblong to linear leaves, 3-5 veins, dotted with numerous translucent and black glands
- ✓ Bright yellow flowers, typically dotted with black glands along margins

Location in Canada

Due to its popularity in the medicinal industry we suspect ornamental plants to exist in Alberta.

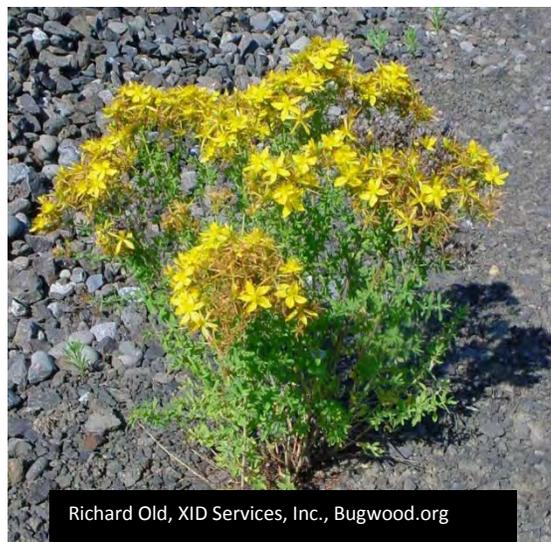
Resources

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/stjohnswort.shtml>

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/ipc/weedinfo/hypericum.htm>

Similar species

Hypericum spp. – According to Flora of Alberta two other species in *Hypericum* have been known to exist in Alberta. *H. formosum* has ovate-oblong to suborbicular, black-dotted along the margin leaves. *H. majus* has lanceolate, not black dotted leaves.



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