

Woolly Yarrow on the Dry Prairie

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Woolly yarrow, *Achillea lanulosa* Nutt., often called western yarrow, milfoil or wild-tansy, is a member of the composite family. The generic name *Achillea* is in honor of the legendary Greek hero Achilles, who is credited with first using yarrow to cure wounds. The specific name *lanulosa* is from the Latin *lana* meaning wool, and refers to the fine, dense, silky-woolly hairs which cover the plant and give it a somewhat greyish appearance.

Woolly yarrow, a common plant of the dry prairie, has extensive rhizomes. The stems are densely white-woolly, somewhat grooved, erect, and up to two feet in height. Leaves are mostly basal, narrowly lance-shaped in outline and from two to eight inches in length. Much divided and sub-divided into very fine segments, the leaves become increasing shorter up the stem and are either stalkless or nearly so.

The dense flower clusters at the ends of the stems are somewhat flattened or convex like the top of a derby hat. The individual flowers are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, the outside or ray florets being petal-like and white or rarely pink. The centre or disk florets are small, numerous, yellow in color.

Owing to its extensive underground organs, yarrow is a soil binding species important in soil erosion control. When such plants are started near the edges of small gullies, their rhizomes soon spread in all directions and serve to check surface run-off. In addition to this vegetative propagation by rhizomes, yarrow, having a long flowering period, is also a strong seed producer.

Yarrow is found in a great variety of habitats, although it generally avoids dense shade. It is a comparatively drought-resistant, and flourishes in the sandy and gravelly soils of the dry prairie. Plants seldom form pure stands on areas larger than a few square feet. In natural, undisturbed areas, yarrow occurs only sparsely, but it increases rapidly under overgrazing. Sheep, and sometimes cattle, seems to relish the flower heads; although they do not eat the stems when they become woody later in the season, they occasionally graze the dried leaves.



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