

***RAPISTRUM RUGOSUM* BASTARD CABBAGE**

FAMILY: BRASSICACEAE (MUSTARD FAMILY) DURATION & HABIT: ANNUAL HERB



Photographer: Mark Simmons Source: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Description: Bastard cabbage is an annual, many-branched, herbaceous plant that grows from 1 to 5 feet or more in height. It has a robust taproot that can become quite large and deep-rooted. Leaves are deep green, lobed and wrinkled, and sometimes have a reddish cast. The terminal lobe is larger than the lateral lobes, especially on the basal leaves. Younger leaves growing higher up on the plant are less lobed and more elongated. Bastard cabbage typically flowers from early spring into summer, bearing clusters of small, showy yellow flowers at the tips of its branches, resembling those of broccoli and cabbage. Bastard cabbage can be identified more easily and certainly by its unusually shaped fruit - a two-segmented seed capsule, called a silique. The seed capsule is stalked, with a long beak at the tip, and contains 1-2 seeds. The seeds are oval-shaped, dark brown, smooth, and tiny (about 1/16-inch).

Two subspecies of plant are recognized: *R. rugosum* ssp. *rugosum* and *R. rugosum* ssp. *orientale*. Bastard cabbage is also known as turnip-weed, common giant mustard, ball mustard, wild turnip, wild rape and tall mustard-weed. Designated a terrestrial noxious-weed seed in Texas.

Ecological Threat: Bastard cabbage is an early successional plant that develops a broad, robust mass of basal leaves, which allows it to successfully out-compete native plant species. In some places, it forms a monoculture (a vegetative cover of mostly one species). Annual bastard-cabbage has long been established on agricultural fields, roadsides, and disturbed lands and is becoming invasive in natural areas such as open forests and along streams.

Biology & Spread: Bastard cabbage seeds germinate early in the growing season (late fall or early winter) quickly covers the ground with blanket of leafy rosettes (circles of leaves at ground level). These dense rosettes block sunlight from reaching seeds and seedlings of native plants.

U.S. Habitat: Bastard cabbage grows mostly in open sites on disturbed soils, including roadsides, ditches, and agricultural areas.