

## PACIFIC SILVERWEED

*Argentina egedii* (Wormsk.)  
Rydb.

Plant Symbol = AREG

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana



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Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Department of Botany

### Alternate Names

*Argentina egedii* ssp. *ededii*, *Argentina egedii* ssp. *groenlandica*, Greenland silverweed, *Potentilla pacifica*, *Potentilla anserina* ssp. *pacifica*.

### Uses

**Ethnobotany.** Pacific silverweed roots were a staple food in the northwest coast region, including Alaska and Washington. Silverweed roots were dug in large quantities, cooked, and often dried for winter and used as a trade item. The roots were generally harvested in the fall, after the leaves had started to die for the winter. Clumps of roots were pried up with a digging stick, and the edible roots – long and sometimes spindle-shaped, with striated, brown skins, were broken off. The roots were always cooked through boiling or roasting to remove the bitter flavor. After cooking, they taste like parsnips. They were often harvested and cooked together with springbank clover rhizomes (*Trifolium wormskoldii*). Pacific silverweed roots were also dried, before or after cooking, and stored for the winter.

It is purported to have potent medicinal properties. The leaves contain tannin, an astringent, and have been used as a tea to relieve diarrhea, lessen fevers, as a purgative, to ease eye inflammations, and to relieve sore throat. The roots were used by the Blackfeet as an antidiarrheal.

**Other Uses.** The stoloniferous growth form aids in substrate stabilization and erosion control. Songbirds, such as snow buntings and rosey finches eat the seeds. Rabbits, cottontails, chipmunks, and ground squirrels eat the foliage and seeds.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Description

**General:** Rose Family (Rosaceae). Pacific silverweed is a low-growing perennial native herb which spreads by creeping stolons. It often forms dense tangles. The pinnately compound and alternate leaves are all basal, glossy green, with silver undersides. The leaflets are deeply notched and toothed, 3-50 cm long, with 5-10 leaflets per side. The leaves dry out and become brown in the winter, but remain intact. The buttercup-like yellow flowers have 5 petals, 5 sepals, and have many stamens and pistils. Pacific silverweed flowers form singly at the nodes of the stolons. The petals are 7-20 mm long. The 2 mm fruits are oval, flattened, and dark red-brown.

**Distribution:** For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site. It is found in the Pacific Northwest and New England into Labrador and Newfoundland. It is found at elevations below 150 m throughout coastal North America and Asia.

**Habitat:** Pacific silverweed typically occurs in high tidal marshes, at or above the mean high water, where it is often associated with tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) and Lyngby sedge (*Carex lyngbyei*). It can also be found in nontidal freshwater meadows and marshes. In these situations, it is often associated with creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), several species of grasses and sedges, and the invasive reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

## Establishment

Pacific silverweed can be propagated easily from container or bare root stock, as it produces many stolons and rhizomes. It can also be propagated from seed. Pacific silverweed is found in wetland areas with very wet soils. It will tolerate brackish conditions, so it can be used in salt marsh and floodplain restoration. It provides good groundcover, however, it can be invasive.

Pacific silverweed spreads vigorously from both stolons and rhizomes. In greenhouse conditions, it is best to dig up and separate plants in the late fall or winter. This is the quiescent period that follows seed maturation and leaves are senescent. They should be planted in full sun in a light, loose soil. Plants should be planted on 12-18 inch centers. They will fill into solid stands in one year. Plants need to be kept moist with frequent watering. Lightly fertilize the plants during the growing season. Pacific silverweed tolerates brackish conditions. Plants may need to be protected from herbivores, such as rabbits or gophers.

## Management

Keep the runners pruned back, because they can be invasive. It is necessary to divide the patch every 3 to 4 years and start a new patch for increased vigor. Younger plants are more vigorous and produce more flowers and seeds.

Turner and Deur (1999) include the following for traditional resource management:

- Ownership of individual patches and their output by Chief's, ensuring long-term care and enhancement of plant production;
- Root feasts as a means of redistribution plant wealth and meeting ceremonial obligations;
- Specialized digging sticks as a harvesting tool to cultivate and turn over the soil;
- Replanting and leaving behind portions of silverweed roots to re-grow the following year;
- Weeding root patches; and
- Individual patches and landscapes were burned regularly.

## Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

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