

## BRIEFER ARTICLES.

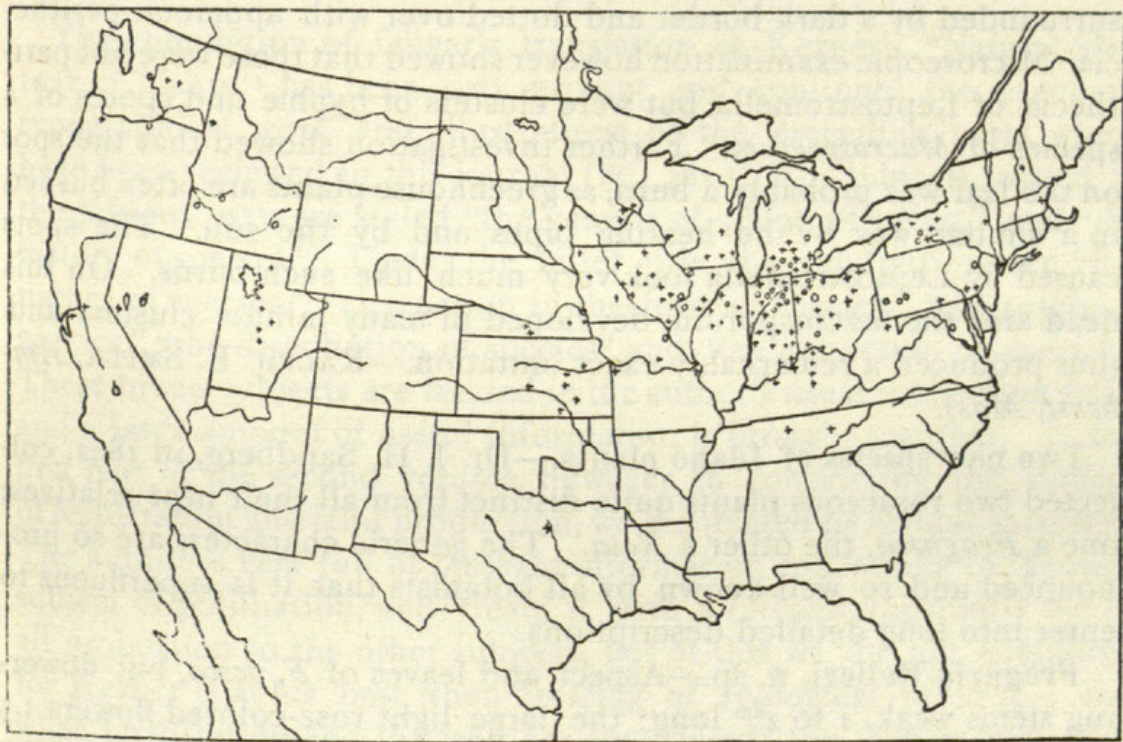
Distribution of prickly lettuce in the United States.—Among the weeds of recent introduction in America the prickly lettuce, *Lactuca Scariola*, ranks next to the Russian thistle in the rapidity with which it has spread to new localities and in the completeness with which it has occupied the area infested. Its range almost equals that of the Russian thistle, extending from ocean to ocean, and from southern Minnesota to northern Texas. It is most abundant in the region from western New York to eastern Iowa. There is a wide area from Montana to Mexico, including the Rocky Mountains and the western plains, from which it has not been reported. It is present in the Great Basin in Utah, Idaho, and Nevada, and west of the Cascades and Sierras in Oregon and California.

The first record that we have of the presence of this plant in America is a specimen now in the Harvard herbarium collected at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1863. In the fifth edition of Gray's Manual (1867) it is said to be found in "waste grounds and roadsides, Cambridge, Mass." Aside from this there appears to be no farther record of it until 1877, when it was collected in St. Louis, Missouri. From 1878 to 1883 it was reported from at least twenty-two localities in states bordering on the great lakes, many of these reports appearing in the GAZETTE for those years. It was introduced in Salt Lake City as early as 1880. During the subsequent decade comparatively little was written about it. In 1894, however, it became so abundant as to attract attention in many parts of the country. Hundreds of requests for the identification of this species were received by the experiment stations and by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Surviving in spite of the dry weather which prevented other vegetation from growing, the prickly lettuce became the most abundant and conspicuous of weeds in many places where it had never been noticed before. The alarm caused by the prickly lettuce in 1894, was due in part, doubtless, to the fact that it was often mistaken for the Russian thistle. During the season of 1895, just past, both the prickly lettuce and the Russian thistle have been better known and less has been heard from either of them, although the practical work of destroying them has been carried on with more vigor than ever.

In some localities the prickly lettuce is less prominent than it was last year. Instances are known where a few plants were noticed the



first year; the following year they were abundant and large; the third year they were very abundant and smaller; the fourth year other vegetation began to choke them out. Insect or fungus enemies may have aided in subduing them, but there are no observations confirming this theory.



The accompanying map indicates the localities in which prickly lettuce has been found, so far as known to the writer at the present time, October 30, 1895. The circles represent localities from which specimens have been examined. The crosses represent reports of localities not yet confirmed by specimens.

This note is published for the sake of obtaining further information about the distribution of the plant; therefore, botanists and others whose attention may be called to it are specially requested to forward to the writer information regarding other localities where it has been found, or where it has been introduced and afterward exterminated.—  
LYSTER H. DEWEY, *Washington, D. C.*

A curious coincidence.—The leaves of several India rubber plants (*Ficus elastica*), growing in the Massachusetts Agricultural College greenhouses, are considerably disfigured by the attacks of *Leptostromella elastica* Ellis. This fungus produces large, ashy grey, dark-bordered spots on the leaves, of a definite and usually oval or elongated form. On these light colored areas the perithecia break out in minute black dots. The effect is very noticeable on the dark green leaves and would seem to be most characteristic and unmistakable. When





Dewey, Lyster H. 1896. "Distribution of Prickly Lettuce in the United States." *Botanical gazette* 21(1), 34–35. <https://doi.org/10.1086/327292>.

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1086/327292>

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