

Wednesday
August 27th,
2025

Weed Wednesday

Foothills County

Issue #7



Spotted Knapweed – *Centaurea maculosa* Designation- Prohibited Noxious

Spotted knapweed was likely introduced from Eastern Europe as a seed contaminant. It is usually a biennial but can also be a short-lived perennial. Spotted knapweed typically grows in well-drained, light to coarse textured soils. It is intolerant of dense shade and constant moisture.

In its first year of growth, it forms a rosette that has deeply lobed leaves up to 15cm long. In its second year, the plant is upright and branched with alternate leaves that are pinnately divided. There can be slight hair on the leaves. It is upright and branched with one to few stems per plant. The pinkish- purple, and occasionally white, flowers are borne singly at the end of branches. At the base of the flower head are bracts that have black tips.



First year rosettes do not form flowers.



Spotted Knapweed seeds can be viable in the soil for 5-10 years. Sites with spotted knapweed must be visited for many years after to ensure eradication.

Spotted Knapweed is a strong competitor, as its roots exude a chemical that inhibits root growth of surrounding plants. Infestations can extend into undisturbed plant communities and can form monocultures.

Small infestations can be managed by cutting or pulling the plant before it flowers. Removing as much of the root system as possible will help reduce the possibility of it re-sprouting. Knapweed can cause skin irritation so wear gloves if hand pulling. Make sure to bag and burn the weeds or drop them off at the land fill.

Aminopyralid by itself or in tank mix with either Metsulfuron-methyl or 2,4-D and Picloram are registered for use on spotted knapweed. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant and don't hesitate to reach out to agricultural services for more information.

There are also biological controls available in Canada. The majority are seed feeders with a few root miners. They have had success with reducing plant size and therefore reducing seed production in areas.

There are many species of knapweed in Alberta that are regulated under the Weed Control Act. Knapweeds are aggressive, competitive, and invasive. If you see one, let agriculture services know. If you would like more information, please contact Kathleen at Kathleen.mchugh@foothillscountyab.ca or at 403-603-5409.

References- [PN_FS-SpottedKnapweed.pdf](#)