

Wednesday
September
10th, 2025

Weed Wednesday

Foothills County

Issue #9



Bighead Knapweed – *Centaurea macrocephala*

Designation- Prohibited Noxious

Bighead knapweed was introduced into North America as an ornamental plant in the early 1800's. This prohibited noxious weed is native to the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe and may still be distributed through the horticultural trade in some areas. It is long-lived perennial likes loamy, well-drained soil with full sun.

Bighead Knapweed's stem is erect, unbranched and covered in soft hairs and can grow to 50-170cm tall. It has lance shaped leaves that are undulating with pointed tips. The leaf edge can be smooth or is slightly toothed. The lower leaves have a short petiole, but the upper leaves are connected directly to the stem. Its leaves are also covered in soft hair.



Bighead Knapweed can grow up to 170cm tall.



Bighead Knapweed primarily reproduces through seed but can be propagated through the root crown.

It has a yellow disc-shaped flower that is composed of many florets. Below the flower head there are clusters of reduced leaves. The flower base is 25-35mm wide and has brown bracts.

When purchasing plants make sure you know what they are as many infestations are a result of garden escapes. Even dried floral arrangements can hold viable seeds.

Cultivation can be a successful method of control if it is deep enough to cut the roots off below the root crown. This will require at least two seasons of cultivation. Clean equipment after cultivation as root pieces can start new infestation.

Small patches may be hand pulled if the entire taproot is removed. If the taproot is not fully removed the plant may resprout. Make sure to burn the weeds or drop them off at the land fill.

Bighead Knapweed is also known as lemon fluff, golden thistle and American basket flower.

If you would like more information, please contact Kathleen at Kathleen.mchugh@foothillscountyab.ca or at 403-603-5409.

References- [PN FS-BigheadKnapweed.pdf](#)