

Carpet Burweed

Invasive Species Alert Sheet

Regional Invasive Species Program

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and health impacts. Local governments and partners are asking for help from all residents to address **carpet burweed** (*Soliva sessilis*) on private property and public lands.

Carpet burweed is a low growing, broadleaf winter annual native to South America. It spreads easily and aggressively in open natural areas such as Garry oak meadows, as well as in lawns, golf courses, RV and tent sites. Carpet burweed can be found in isolated areas of southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Lower Mainland.

Why is carpet burweed a problem?

- **Highly invasive**, it displaces native plants, threatening local ecosystems and endangered species. Plants can quickly multiply to form a thick carpet that blankets the ground, especially lawns. Plants are too small to be controlled by lawn mowers. When plants die back in late summer, they leave behind brown patches. The small size of this plant makes it difficult to detect at an early stage of invasion, which allows it to grow into a carpet of many thousands of plants before it is noticed and managed.
- **Sharp spines:** Spines on seeds can pierce and lodge in skin, footwear, fur, feet, paws, tents, tarps, equipment and tires, resulting in easy distribution and spread.
- **Impacts recreation:** Carpet burweed threatens open areas in parks, golf courses, tent & RV sites, where its very sharp seeds can render terrain un-walkable in bare feet.

What does it look like?

- **Flowers:** extremely small green-yellow flowers growing at the base of leaves
- **Stems:** low growing, usually no more than 2cm high although some stems can reach up to 7cm.
- **Leaves:** lime green, carrot-like leaves
- **Seeds:** horn-like, with sharp spines, 2.5 to 3.5mm long. 5 to 10 seeds per seed head, in the axils of leaves.
- **Roots:** shallow, fibrous roots



Carpet burweed is a low growing plant often seen among grass and on paths.

Could be confused with:

- Parsley-piert (*Aphanes arvensis*) - introduced
- Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*) - introduced
- Pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea*) - introduced
- Spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) - native
- Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) - introduced

Habitat and biology

- Broadleaf winter annual that germinate in the fall
- Grows up to 10-15cm in diameter & up to 7cm tall, but usually lower
- Each plant produces up to 200 seeds
- Once seeds are dispersed in the summer, they remain dormant in the soil until autumn, when rains trigger germination and the beginning of a new life-cycle

What to do if you spot a carpet burweed plant:

- **Inform:** learn how to identify this plant and stay out of infested areas. Please report all patches to the contacts below who can help confirm the plant's identity and advise on its management.
- **Prevent spread:** brush off shoes, tools, clothing, vehicles, pets and equipment before leaving an infested site.
- **Management:** depends on site characteristics and may require blending of different techniques below:
 - Burn with hand-torch or multi-burner equipment.
 - Manual removal: hand-pull or dig out, a car key can help pry out shallow roots. (This is effective for small patches only.)
 - Sheet mulch: this method is still being tested. In areas that are not sensitive, cover with cardboard, followed by wood-chips or mulch to suppress growth of all plants.
 - Herbicide: may be helpful. Ensure all provincial and local regulations are followed.
- **Replant:** after any management, plant only with invasive-free soil, native seed mix, sod or native plants. With native species, seed in late February or early September, then plant with native plants or sod.
- **Monitor:** seed bank can survive and persist after plants are removed. Monitor annually for regrowth and new outbreaks for many years, revisit site several times, especially from end of October to May.



- **Report:** use the BC Government's Report Invasives app or report to the contact below

Proper disposal:

- **Do not compost!** Flowers can still form viable seeds and rhizomes can continue to grow after removal. Put all plant material in garbage bags and dispose. The best option is to take the bags labelled "invasive species" to the Hartland Landfill.



Seed spread occurs when the seed spine punctures the skin of humans and animals or attaches to animal fur/paws, footwear, clothing, maintenance or recreational equipment (i.e. tents, tarps, mowers, etc.), lawn clippings and vehicle/bike tires.



Carpet burweed can be found in isolated areas on the Southern Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island, as far north as Ucluelet. Once discovered, the plant must be rapidly eradicated to prevent further spread.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.



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Revised December 2022