

# Black Knapweed

## Invasive Species Alert Sheet

### Capital Region Invasive Species Program

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and health impacts.

Local governments and other partners are asking for help from all residents to address black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) outbreaks on private property and public lands.

This plant is native to the Mediterranean and outbreaks in the capital region are primarily in Metchosin.

### Why is black knapweed a problem?

- Highly prolific seed producer, forms monocultures
- Large infestations increase runoff and erosion, leading to sedimentation of watercourses
- Alters soil chemistry, preventing the growth of other plants and making pasture unpalatable to grazing animals
- Displaces native vegetation and agricultural crops
- Dead plant material can increase risk of fire



### What does it look like?

- Tap-rooted perennial, 30-150 cm tall
- **Stems:** upright, branched stems covered with short hairs, plant appears wooly (first year plant forms rosettes close to the ground)
- **Leaves:** on the lower stem are 5-20 cm, lance-shaped, widest at the base or middle, with leaf stalks (leaves decrease in size up the stem and may lose leaf stalks)
- **Flowers:** thistle-like flowers are purple (sometimes white), occur singly at the end of stems and branches, composed of 40-100 tubular florets, base of the flower is oval to globe-shaped, 15-18 mm in diameter, **covered with stiff black/brown bracts with long black fringes**
- **Seeds:** tan coloured, approximately 3 mm, finely hairy with black bristles
- This species can be confused with other knapweed species such as spotted knapweed (*Centaurea biebersteinii*) or diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*).



## Habitat and biology

- Tolerates a wide range of conditions and habitats, but grows best in disturbed, well-drained soils and full sun
- Found in open fields, meadows, roadsides
- Escapee from ornamental gardens and ship ballast
- Perennial in the sunflower (Asteraceae) family
- Flowers from June-October
- Reproduces by seed, can regenerate from the crown and by root spread
- Seeds spread by wind, water, soil, agricultural produce, animals, machinery and vehicles
- Over 18,000 seeds per plant produced annually
- Seeds can remain viable in soil for at least five years

## Proper disposal

- Please place all plant parts in garbage bags labelled "invasive species" and take to Hartland Landfill
- **Do not compost!** Flowers can still form viable seeds after removal

***Please report all infestations (both small and large infestations) to the contacts at the bottom of this page.***

## What should you do if you spot a black knapweed plant?

- **Prevent spread:** Don't buy, grow or trade this plant. Clean off footwear, pets, equipment, & vehicles when in areas where this species may be present and reduce spread by using clean soil, gravel and hay/straw free from seeds
- **Inform:** report outbreaks to the contacts listed below for support and monitoring
- **Remove:** if you have an outbreak on your property, please follow instructions below for removal

### ***For small infestations (less than 25-30 plants):***

- **Manually remove:** before flowering, dig or pull to avoid soil disturbance
- **Cut:** if unable to remove entire root, cut the root about 3 cm below ground
- **Bag flowers/seeds:** if in flower or seed, carefully remove and bag flowers/seedheads and bag before digging
- **Clean before leaving:** to avoid further spread, wash/brush off footwear, vehicles and equipment before leaving site
- **Monitor:** return in spring and fall for a few years to monitor growth and remove new plants
- **Replant:** especially in disturbed areas, replant with non-invasive or native plants

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

P: 250.360.3302  
E: [invasive@crd.bc.ca](mailto:invasive@crd.bc.ca)  
[www.reportaweedbc.ca](http://www.reportaweedbc.ca)  
[www.crd.bc.ca/invasive](http://www.crd.bc.ca/invasive)

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