



**Bighead**



**Black**



**Diffuse**



**Meadow**



**Russian**



**Spotted**



**Brown**



**Yellow starthistle**

Knapweeds	Growth Habit	Leaves
<b>Bighead</b> <i>Centaurea macrocephala</i>	Upright, stems unbranched; perennial	Light-green, broadly lance-shaped with toothed edges and pointed tips
<b>Black</b> <i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Upright, stems are few and branch near the middle; perennial from a woody root crown	Green-gray, broadly lance-shaped basal leaves on a stalk
<b>Diffuse</b> <i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	Upright, stems branch profusely; annual or short-lived perennial	Silvery-green; lower leaves are divided, upper leaves are narrow and elliptical
<b>Meadow</b> <i>Centaurea jacea x nigra</i>	Upright; perennial growing from a woody root crown	Deep-green leaves are lance-shaped & stalkless; basal leaves taper at both ends, upper are leaves smaller and not lobed
<b>Russian</b> <i>Acroptilon repens</i>	Upright; hardy, long-lived, perennial spreading by creeping roots and seeds	Silvery-green; lower leaves long and lobed, upper leaves smaller & toothed.
<b>Spotted</b> <i>Centaurea biebersteinii</i>	Upright; biennial or short-lived perennial; rosette will form in the first year followed by stocks in the second	Medium-green with a silvery-gray cast; deeply lobed on young plants becoming elliptical with maturity
<b>Brown</b> <i>Centaurea jacea</i>	Upright, stems branch near the top; perennial	Lance-shaped, undivided; leaves grow progressively smaller near the top
<b>Yellow Starthistle</b> <i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	Upright, stems branch and are ridged; winter annual forming a rosette early & then growing upright.	Grayish-green; lower leaves are deeply lobed, upper leaves are smaller and pointed

Root System	Flower	Bracts	Taken from PNW432
Woody Taproot	Solitary, in a large globe-shaped head; yellow	Thin & papery, with fringed margins	
Woody Taproot	Rose to lavender	Covered with "comb-like", dark brown or black fringed margins up to 3x as long as the bract	
Taproot	White, rose, or purple	Covered with "comb-like" spines	
Woody to fleshy Taproot	Solitary, globe-shaped heads; rose to purple	Fringes gold to dark brown, about the width of the bract and rounded at the tip	
Horizontal Taproot	Pink to purple	Pearly and papery, with no noticeable fringes or spines	
Stout Taproot	Solitary; purple, pink or sometimes white	Fringed tips dark & short	
Woody Taproot	Rose to purple	Tips are wider than base and the thin, papery margins have a dark brown center	
Taproot	Single, terminal; bright yellow	Modified into stiff spines up to 3/4" long	

## ➤ Overview

Knapweeds are aggressive, invasive noxious weeds of pastures, cultivated fields, travel corridors, and any bare ground sites.

They increase soil erosion, consume soil nutrients and crowd out native vegetation. Weed specialists have attributed the success of some knapweeds to their ability to release a natural herbicide that eliminates competition by killing neighboring plants. This enables these weeds to quickly and effectively take over an area once introduced.

Knapweed infestations are noted to increase production costs for ranchers, impair the quality of wildlife habitat, decrease plant diversity, increase soil erosion rates, decrease the visual quality and appeal of recreational lands, and pose fire hazards. These species have little value as forage for cattle and game and some can cause chewing disease in horses.

## ➤ Dispersal Mechanisms

Knapweed is easily moved by animals and birds that may pick up the weed seeds and disperse them. Wind and water can also move knapweed seeds, though the biggest contributors to the movement of weed seeds are humans. We transport them on our vehicles, on clothes, on recreational gear and equipment, and on farm and other heavy equipment.

## ➤ Management

Timing is key for effective control of knapweeds, early detection and fast action can stop the weeds from becoming established in an area. Managing a knapweed problem should be done by using a combination of mechanical, chemical, cultural, biological controls. You should do a site specific evaluation to determine what control tactics will work the best for your land. For more information on control consult your county weed control board, county extension office, or the Pacific Northwest Weed Control Handbook.

**The best knapweed control is prevention! You must correctly identify the plant to keep an infestation from becoming established.**

# FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WEEDS IN WASHINGTON, CONTACT:

Washington State  
Noxious Weed Control Board  
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504  
(360) 902-1901

Web site: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov>

Or

Washington State Department of Agriculture  
21 North First Avenue #103  
Yakima, WA 98902  
(509) 225-2604

Or

Your local County Noxious Weed Control Board:

## You Can Help Protect Washington's Environment from Noxious Weeds!

Produced by WSNWCB & Sue Winterowd, Coordinator of the  
Stevens County Noxious Weed Control Board  
Published 2003

# SELECTED KNAPWEEDS OF WASHINGTON



**Information  
&  
Identification**