Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Aster Family

Knapweed Species

Centaurea spp.

Identification Tips

- Flowers are pink, purple, or white, with many petals; appearing similar to a thistle.
- Flowers have distinct scaly bracts, leaflike structures at the base of the flowers; bracts are important for identifying knapweed species.
- Leaves can be ovate to oblong or frilly with wavy margins and are green to grayish.
- Gray-green stems appear woody with age.
- Plants grow upright and branched, growing 1 to 4.5 feet tall.
- There are **eight** knapweed species listed as noxious weeds in Washington; four are known to occur in Mason County.

Regulated Class A and B Noxious Weeds: Control Required

Biology

- Herbaceous biennials or perennials, spend first year as basal rosettes.
- Flower from mid to late summer.
- Dependent on the species they can produce about 200 to 1,000 seeds, which can remain viable for up to eight years.
- Seeds are carried by water, humans, and animals.
- Different species can easily hybridize with each other.

Knapweed infestion along a roadside in Mason County.

Impacts

- Outcompetes native vegetation, reducing forage and habitat for wildlife.
- Produces allelopathic compounds, negatively impacting growth and establishment of native plant species.
- Increases management costs for farmers.
- In states with high levels of knapweed infestations, it is estimated that big game forage has been reduced 50-90%.
- Has potential to increase soil erosion and fire hazard.

Distribution

- Native to Europe and North Africa, it is thought that knapweed was introduced from contaminated soil or alfalfa.
- Knapweed thrives in well drained soil with full sun; and can be found invading pastures, rangelands, roadsides, disturbed sites, gravel pits, and forest openings.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:
(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or patriciag@co.mason.wa.us
https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/

What You Can Do

Control of knapweed species is a legal requirement in Mason County. It is not yet widespread in the county. Help stop the spread of this noxious weed by checking your yard, local parks, and the roadsides in your area for flowering plants. By eliminating existing plants, we can keep it from spreading. Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board if you see knapweed around Mason County.

Control Methods

For the best results, control methods must be carried out over several years. Survey your yard and neighboring properties for flowering knapweed. Initiate control or report infestations when found. Choose control methods that are best suited to your site. After removal, sites must be monitored for several years for new plants. **Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control for more information.**

Prevention

It is illegal to sell or transport knapweed in Washington State. Inspect recently purchased hay and soil for germinants. Survey your yard and surrounding areas for knapweed in early summer when plants are in bloom.

Manual Control

Caution: Skin contact may cause irritation for some; wear gloves when pulling.

Small infestations can be manually removed by using a shovel, making sure to remove all of the root.

Flowering plants can produce viable seed even after being pulled, so place in a sealed garbage bag to avoid seed production and dispose of in the trash. Deadheading will delay flowering, but plants will quickly rebloom. This method cannot be used for control.


Yakima County Noxious Weed Control Board


showy fleabane

After any control method, replant or reseed an area with desired vegetation to add competition and reduce knapweed reestablishment. A good alternative to try reseeding with is **showy fleabane** *(Erigeron speciosus)*, a WA native.

Knapweed Species in Mason County

Bighead knapweed


Meadow knapweed


Diffuse knapweed

Spotted knapweed

Mechanical Control

Plowing or tilling can be used to control knapweed. Monitor area for seedlings and regrowth from root fragments. Replant site to add competition and slow reestablishment. Mowing and cutting does not work to control knapweed and only helps to delay flowering. Mowed plants can flower below mower blades.

Chemical

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.

Herbicide is considered the most effective method to control large knapweed infestations. Products containing triclopyr, aminopyralid, or glyphosate have been shown to be effective in treating knapweeds. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide and will injure all vegetation including grasses. Triclopyr and aminopyralid are selective herbicides, only impacting broadleaf species.

Take care when applying herbicide to reduce off target damage. It is suggested to treat knapweed while it is actively growing, from rosette to budding stage. Consult product label to determine best timing for treatment. The most effective control strategy will integrate multiple control methods.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.