

Hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*)

Identification: Hoary alyssum is an exotic annual to short-lived perennial forb of the Brassicaceae family. Hoary, meaning grayish or aged, refers to the grayish-colored foliage caused by tiny, stellate (star-shaped) hairs that cover the surface (visible with a hand lens). Plants are typically 7-30 inches tall with numerous flowering stems. Leaves are entire, and alternately arranged. Flowers grow in racemes clustered at the stem tips. Each of the four small, white petals has a notch, giving the petal a rabbit-ear shape (inset image at right). Consistent with most Brassicaceae flowers, there are two short outer stamens and four long inner stamens. Hoary alyssum may flower from early spring to late fall given adequate water and light.



Impacts: Toxicity to horses has been reported when green or dried forage is contaminated by more than 30 percent. It can proliferate in forage crops, pastures, and rangelands and rapidly fills in areas disturbed or overgrazed.

Habitat: Hoary alyssum thrives on dry and disturbed ground on soils with poor fertility. It is commonly found growing along roads and trails (below), gravelly stream and lake banks, in lawns, farmyards, and vacant lots. It can also be found in pastures and hayfields. In Montana, it has been reported in 27 counties, with the highest number of reports coming from Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison, and Ravalli Counties.

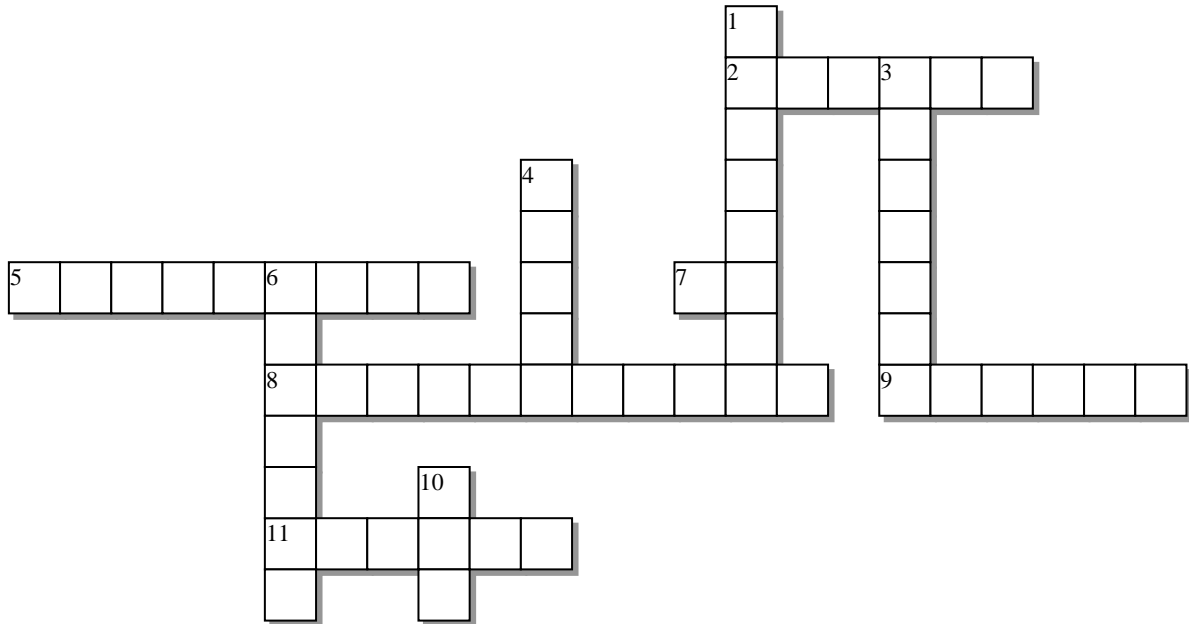


Spread: Hoary alyssum likely originated in North America as a contaminant of clover and alfalfa seed. Contaminations of forage and lawn seed, as well as contaminated hay, are still considered likely means of long distance seed dispersal. Seed may also disperse long distances on mowers, vehicles, other machinery, and in contaminated soil and gravel. Because the plants are not particularly palatable, it will increase in range and pastureland without proper management.

Management Priorities: Hoary alyssum is listed as a **Priority 2A** noxious weed in Montana. Maintaining healthy stands of vegetation and reseeding after major disturbances are the best ways to prevent establishment. Hand pulling small infestations is effective as long as the root crown is removed (best achieved when the soil is moist). For larger infestations, herbicides are an effective control option, but repeated applications may be necessary to treat plants that emerge throughout the growing season. For hayfields and pastures, methods to improve the health of the existing

plant community, such as irrigation or fertilization where available, and proper grazing are recommended. Applying herbicide and reseeding sparse pastures should help to provide long term control of hoary alyssum. For more information see "Biology, Ecology, and Management of Hoary Alyssum" EB0194 at <http://msuextension.org/publications/AgandNaturalResources/EB0194.pdf>

Weed Post Puzzle: Test your knowledge of Hoary alyssum



Across:

- 2 - Toxicity to horses may occur when forage is contaminated by more than ____%
- 5 - Leaf arrangement is _____
- 7 - Hoary alyssum's state listing in MT
- 8 - Number of counties in MT reporting hoary alyssum
- 9 - A translucent or membranous _____ divides the seedpod into 2 chambers and is visible after seeds disperse*
- 11 - Leaf margins are _____

Down:

- 1 - Shape of the tiny hairs that cover the plant
- 3 - Flowers are arranged in _____
- 4 - Another name for Just For Men's, "A Touch of Gray"
- 6 - These give petals a rabbit-ear shape
- 10 - Total number of hoary alyssum stamens

*Refer to the Extension Bulletin for answers to these questions.
Solutions are posted on the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:
<http://www.msuextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html>

