

Blueweed
(*Echium vulgare*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weeds infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Blueweed (*Echium vulgare*) is native to southern Europe, and was first introduced into the United States in the early 1800's. Blueweed is a biennial that has a black taproot along with fibrous lateral roots. Blueweed has basal leaves that are narrow and 2 to 10" long. Leaves alternate on the stalk and become smaller near the apex or top of the plant. All of the leaves are covered with stiff hairs. Blueweed can have multiple stems and look bushy in appearance, stems are 12-32" tall. Stalks are covered with short hairs and scattered long stiff hairs. The long stiff hairs often have swollen dark bases that form flecks on the stalk. Flower buds of blueweed are reddish purple, and become bright blue upon flowering. Flowers are arranged on the upper side of short stems that grow longer after flowering. The petals of the blueweed flower are fused at the base into a short tube that flares. There are five distinctively red stamens, four are long and one is short. Blueweed only reproduces through seed. Seeds are called "nutlets." Nutlets are clustered into groups of four. Nutlets are greyish-brown, angular, have a very rough texture and are wrinkled in appearance. Nutlets can be spread by wind or water. They are also spread when they get stuck in animal fur or on the clothing and shoes or vehicles of humans, who unknowingly move them to new places. Blueweed can be controlled by various integrated weed management techniques such as hand pulling and herbicides. If you decide to use hand pulling as a control method, be sure to wear leather gloves as the hairs that cover the stems can act like fiberglass if they come in contact with skin. Blueweed is also toxic if eaten by livestock and can be fatal to sheep and horses if ingested.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at (406) (Phone number). Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.