

Diffuse knapweed
(*Centaurea dissusa*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed 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.

Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) is native to Turkey, Syria, the Balkans, Ukraine and southern Russia; it was introduced into the United States as a contaminant in a shipment of alfalfa seed. Diffuse knapweed was first identified in Washington State in 1907 and now occupies 19 states. The leaves of diffuse knapweed are grey-green in color; rosette leaves at the base of the plant are pinnately divided and have small hairs, while mature leaves alternate on the stem and are divided into long narrow segments that are broadly lanceolate. The stems of diffuse knapweed can grow up to 2' in height and are highly branched making a ball-shaped plant. Flower heads are white to purple or lavender in color, and their bracts are fringed with cream to brown colored spines with a long, spreading, stiff spine at the tip. Diffuse knapweed seeds are small, brown or grey in color, and a single plant can produce 18,000 seeds! Diffuse knapweed can be spread by: farming practices, wildlife, water, and wind. The wind does not blow the seed far, but in the fall the wind breaks the plant off at the ground and blows it like a tumbleweed dropping seeds as it rolls. Diffuse knapweed can be controlled by various integrated weed management techniques. There are eight bio bugs that feed on knapweed, *Cyphocleonus achates* a root boring weevil whose larva, pupa and adult *Cyphos* feed on the roots of diffuse knapweed, injuring the plant and limiting its growth.

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.