

Hoary alyssum  
(*Berteroa incana*)

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.

Hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*) is an annual to a short lived perennial forb that is native to east-central Europe and western Asia. Historically, hoary alyssum was used as a folk remedy for rabies, another name for hoary alyssum is "madwort" or "heal-bite." Habitats where you'll likely find hoary alyssum are dry, gravelly disturbed sites such as roads, railroads, trails, gravelly stream or lake banks, vacant lots, overgrazed pastures and in hay meadows. Hoary alyssum has a slender taproot and stems can grow 1 to 3' tall. Stems are branched and covered with star-shaped hairs. Leaves are 1 to 2" long with slender stalks. Flowers of hoary alyssum are white with four deeply notched petals. Hoary alyssum only reproduces by seed. Seeds form in flattened, oval seed pods with two chambers separated by a membrane; each chamber contains 3 to 7 seeds. When the pod shatters releasing the seed, only the membrane remains. The name "hoary" alyssum is derived from the star-shaped hairs that occur everywhere on this plant. These star-shaped hairs give the plant a "hoary" appearance much like that of hoar frost that office on cold, clear nights when heat is lost into the open sky. Hoar frost causes large, white frost crystals to form on object giving trees, bushes, and other objects the appearance that they have white hair everywhere! Hoary alyssum can be toxic to horses if ingested and remains toxic if cut and cured in hay.

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.