

Russian knapweed
(*Acroptilon repens*)

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.

Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*) is native to Eurasia and was likely introduced into North America as a contaminant in alfalfa around 1898. Russian knapweed typically inhabits roadsides, pastures, croplands, clear cuts, irrigation ditches, riverbanks and other areas that have been disturbed. Russian knapweed has an extensive rhizomatous root system that creates dense colonies. The roots of this plant are easily recognizable because they are woody, have a bark like texture and have buds that form along the roots that develop into shoots. The stem and leaves of Russian knapweed are grey-green in color because they are covered with fine white hairs. The leaves are alternate and leaves that occur toward the bottom of the plant are lanceolate and are deeply lobed. Leaves that occur on the upper portion of the plant are smaller, oblong and toothed. Flowers of this plant are pink-purple and bloom from June to September. The bracts of Russian knapweed are papery smooth and broad with rounded tips while the inner bracts are more narrow and hairy. Russian knapweed seeds are called achenes. Achenes are white and slightly ridged; each achene has a feather-like structure called a pappus which has bristles. This pappus is used for transportation by the wind and falls off as the seed reaches maturity. Every year a single Russian knapweed plant can produce up to 1,200 seeds. Remember that Russian knapweed can spread through both root shoots and seeds, so be careful not to move any soil from an infested area to an unaffected area.

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.