

Spotted knapweed  
(*Centaurea stoebe*)

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.

Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) is native to Eastern Europe, and was first introduced into the United States by accident in the late 1800's, either as a contaminant in crop seed or in the soil which accumulates at the bottom of a ship's cargo area. Spotted knapweed occurs in all 56 counties in Montana. This plant has a root system comprised of a taproot as well as lateral roots. When mowed repetitively this plant can adjust and grow flowers and seeds close to the ground, so spotted knapweed can range from 2 to 4" tall depending on management. Young spotted knapweed plants form a greyish-green rosette. After the rosette stage, stems and leaves are blue-green but can appear to be silver-grey due to the tiny hairs that cover these surfaces. Pink to purple flowers bloom from June to September. Flowers are surrounded by oval bracts that have black tips giving them a "spotted" appearance. A single spotted knapweed plant can produce as many as 300 flower heads which are capable of generating 140,000 seeds. The seeds can remain viable for up to 5 year in undisturbed soil. The seeds of this plant are oval, tan, and have a short tufted pappus. Spotted knapweed is often considered a "pioneer plant" which means that it establishes quickly in areas where the soil has been disturbed. There are six biological control insects/agents that are highly recommended for use in Montana.

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.