

Whitetop
(*Cardaria draba*)

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.

Whitetop (*Cardaria draba*) is native to Russia and Eurasia and was accidentally introduced into the United States in contaminated crop seed in the early 1900's. Whiteop was first discovered in Gallatin County, Montana, in 1916. There are actually three different *Cardaria* species that are collectively referred to as "whitetop;" *C. pubescens*, *C. chalpensis*, and *C. draba*. Whitetop typically inhabits open, sunny areas that have been recently disturbed. These areas include over grazed pastures, waste areas, roadsides, and open grasslands. Whitetop is a creeping perennial and can grow up to 2' in height with rhizomatous roots, which can extend 2' down and up to 12' out. The plant is silvery gray-green in color and its leaves are lance to arrowhead shaped and covered with fine hairs. The lower leaves are stalked and the upper leaves clasp the stem. Whitetop produces numerous white flowers that have 4 petals on ½" long stalks. These dense clusters of flowers create a white, flat-topped appearance. One plant is capable of producing up to 4,800 seeds. Seeds are produced in fruiting pods that contain 2 chambers, each capable of producing one seed. Seeds are oval in shape and reddish-brown in color. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 4 years. Seeds are scattered when the side wall of the seed pod ruptures or when the seed pods fall to the ground. Seeds can germinate in the fall of the spring. Whitetop is difficult to control because it can reproduce through rhizomes as well as seeds. Whitetop often requires many years of repetitive herbicide treatments; integrated weed management techniques such as hand pulling and herbicides when combined work best in controlling whitetop.

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.