

Russian knapweed

Centaurea repens

Description

Introduced to North America in the early 1900's.

Toxic to horses. This species is listed as a prohibited noxious weed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

Habit

Perennial herb that can grow up to 3 ft (1m) tall.

Tap root can reach up to 8 ft and has horizontal and vertical roots. Roots can be brown to black in color and scaly.

Leaves

Basal leaves are lobed and 2-4 in long while upper leaves are smaller have smooth margins.

Covered with dense gray hairs.

Stems

Originate from a basal rosette of leaves; erect,



covered in dense gray hairs, 1-3 ft (18-36 in) tall,
with many branches.

Flowers

Pink, purple or white in color, turn straw color as they mature. Flower heads are solitary, urn-shaped and approximately 0.25 - 0.5 in in diameter; blooms from summer to fall.

Fruits and Seeds

Produces 50-500 seeds per shoot which are viable for 2-3 years in soil. Fruits are ivory colored with a tuft of hair that falls off at maturity.

Habitat

Native to Eurasia specifically southern Ukraine, southeast Russia, Iran and Mongolia. Found in disturbed sites, along roadsides, riverbanks, irrigation ditches, pastures, waste places, clear-cuts, and croplands.

Reproduction

Primary reproduction is vegetatively and second is by seed.

Similar

Brownray knapweed (*Centaurea jacea*), Meadow knapweed (*Centaurea xmoncktonii*); Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*); Common crupina (*Crupina vulgaris*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

One of the most difficult to control. Hand pull and treat with herbicides for small infestations.

Biologically controlled by the Russian knapweed gall nematode and the Russian knapweed mite.

Credits

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