

Spotted knapweed

Centaurea stoebe

Description

This species is listed as a prohibited noxious weed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. It poses a serious threat to western rangelands; may cause skin reactions in some individuals.

Habit

Short-lived herbaceous biennial or perennial reaching 0.6-1.2 m (2-4 ft).

Leaves

All leaves pale or grayish green with rough fine hairs; basal leaves form a rosette which may persist for up to four years; basal and lower stem leaves up to 15 cm (6 in) long; leaflets deeply divided to irregularly lobed; tapered at both ends; upper stem leaves smaller (2-7 cm in length) with few or no lobes.





Stems

1-7 upright rough stems that branch towards the upper half of the plant.

Flowers

Numerous, pink-purple, terminal solitary flowers at the end of each stem, phyllaries with dark tips and fringed margins; bloom from July through September.

Fruits and Seeds

Small brown wind-dispersed seeds, germinate throughout the growing season; remain viable for up to nine years.

Habitat

Roadsides and right-of-ways, old fields, pastures, undisturbed dry prairies and oak and pine barrens; also appears on dunes and beaches during low water conditions.

Reproduction

By prolific seed production and to a lesser extent by lateral roots.

Similar

Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*), diffuse or white-flowered knapweed (*C. diffusa*), black knapweed (*C. nigra*), and yellow star thistle (*C. solstitialis*). The best way to distinguish spotted knapweed is by the dark tips and fringed margins of its phyllaries, although these species are also problems.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor well-drained, sunny sites; knapweed is recognizable throughout the growing season. Wear gloves, long pants and sleeves to prevent skin contact. Begin control efforts in highest quality areas; pull or dig plants in small infestations and remove entire root. Remove flower/seed heads from site. Foliar herbicide application of rosettes is most effective before the stem elongates. Continue control efforts until the seed bank is exhausted.

Credits

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