

Clallam County Noxious Weed Alert

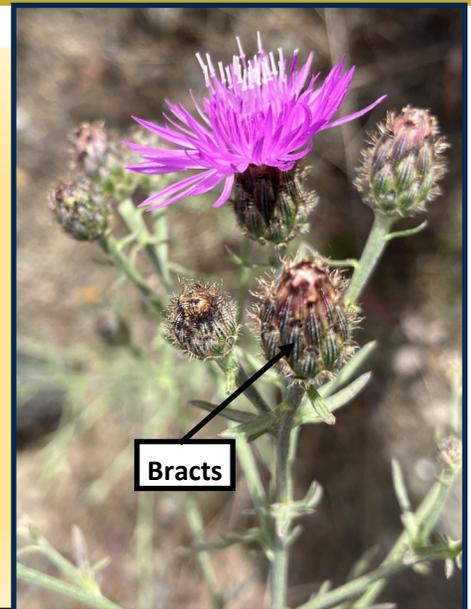
Spotted knapweed

Centaurea stoebe

Class B Noxious Weed
Control Required

Identification

- Biennial to perennial plant growing up to 5 feet tall
- Plant starts as a rosette (circular arrangement of leaves close to the ground) of deeply lobed leaves
- Leaves vary from deeply lobed near the base to decreasing in size and becoming less lobed on the stems
- Leaves are blue-gray in color
- Flowerheads are solitary, usually pink/purple, but can be white
- Scales (bracts) at the base of the flower are brown/black, egg-shaped, with comb-like fringe along the edges. Bracts have dark fringed margins that can give the buds a spotted look



Impacts

Spotted knapweed is extremely aggressive, quickly establishing in fields and meadows and outcompetes desirable forage and native species. It produces an oil that deters other plants from growing.

Reproduction

Spotted knapweed reproduces by seed and vegetatively from lateral roots just below the soil surface. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for about 8 years.



Look-a-likes

Absinth wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) and meadow knapweed (*Centaurea x moncktonii*) are both noxious weeds that grow in areas similar to where spotted knapweed can be found.



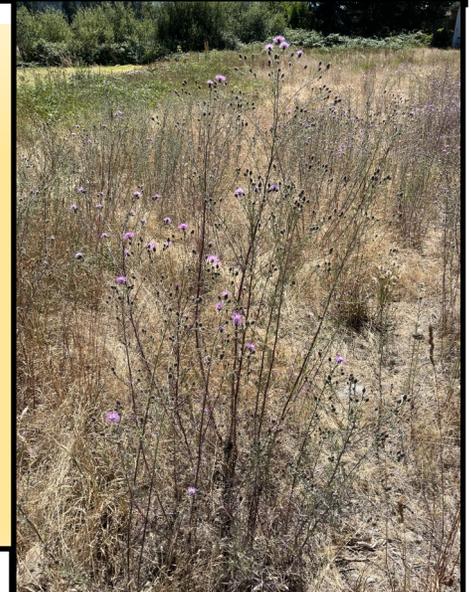
Absinth wormwood

Absinth wormwood has similar colored leaves but they are more showy and full looking. It has small yellow flowers. Wormwood has a strong sage-like scent when crushed.

Meadow knapweed has a larger bud under the flower than spotted knapweed and has simple leaves. Meadow knapweed is also required for control.



Meadow knapweed



Control Methods

General: Plants that are removed when flowering are still able to develop viable seeds. Please bag and throw away all plant parts removed. Do not compost.

Control often takes a couple of years, so checking infestations multiple times each year is necessary.

Mechanical: Hand removal is possible with small, young infestations. Smaller plants are much easier to remove than larger, established plants. It is important to try to remove as much of the root as possible. Spotted knapweed can regrow from lateral roots, so revisiting the treatment site multiple times each year will be necessary. Frequent mowing may keep meadow knapweed from flowering, but will lead to flowers developing below the mow line, where mowing can then spread viable seeds to new areas.

Cultural/Biological: Promoting competitive vegetation can slow the spread of spotted knapweed. Some biological control agents have been released in our county and have helped reduce our knapweed infestations.

Chemical: Please follow all regulations and labels when applying herbicides. Always wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when using herbicides. In some cases, such as treatment in or around standing water, a permit or special license is required. A systemic herbicide, which will attack both the plant's shoot and root system, is recommended. Adding a surfactant to the herbicide mix is also recommended, as it increases herbicide absorption into the plant. Do not cut or mow plants right before or for 2 weeks after application to allow the plant to absorb the herbicide. Please refer to the herbicide label for livestock and hay restrictions. Chemically treated plants can become more palatable to livestock when plants begin to wilt. Successful treatments will depend on the treatment location, site specifications, timing, and weather. **For more information about herbicides or site specific use, please contact the Noxious Weed Control Board.**

***For best control of spotted knapweed, treat when plants emerge in the spring and are rapidly growing to before flower buds form. Fall treatments of new regrowth is also suggested.**



Presented by the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board; revised 1/2026

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