



# DIFFUSE KNAPWEED

*Centaurea diffusa*

Cindy Roche, Bugwood.org



- \* Other names: White knapweed, Tumble knapweed
- \* Diffuse Knapweed is a Class B Designate weed.
- \* A biennial or short lived, aggressive perennial from the Asteraceae Family spreads primarily by seeds and may on occasion regenerate from the crown.
- \* Diffuse knapweed grows from 8 to 40 inches tall and has branching stems covered in short, dense hairs and a very long tap root. Its basal leaves grow 7 to 8 inches long and with stem leaves reducing in size alternately on the upright stems. Flowers are white and sometimes lavender and grow out of

urn-shaped bracts at the tips of the many branches. The bracts are leathery, yellowish green with obvious veins, and are edged with a fringe of spines plus a longer spreading spine/thorn at the tip.

- \* Diffuse knapweed contains the allelopathic chemical cnicin, which suppresses the growth of other species and creates a monoculture.
- \* D.T. decreases the value of hay and can decrease the value of the land. Other losses include soil erosion, wildlife population reduction, soil and water resource depletion, native species reduction, biodiversity reduction, and the disflavoring of milk.
- \* It reproduces mainly by seed, but can regrow from the root stock. When the plant is broken at the base, it behaves as tumbleweed and disperses its seed.
- \* Diffuse knapweed is weedy along roadsides, on disturbed land and in waste places, often on gravelly or light soil. It has shown wide adaptability, but does not tolerate flooding or shade.

## CONTROL OPTIONS

- \* The most effective control of Diffuse Knapweed is prevention. Above all, prevent plants from going to seed. Small, isolated infestations can be dug out if the soil is damp or sandy. Be careful to collect and dispose of all pieces of roots and crown to prevent them from re-establishing. Double-bag flowering parts to prevent seed spread.



- ✦ Anyone working with diffuse knapweed or other knapweed species should wear protective clothing and avoid getting knapweed sap into cuts or open abrasions as it may cause irritation
- ✦ Five biocontrol agents are available for diffuse knapweed in Washington State. For more information about the biological control of diffuse knapweed, please visit [WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project](#).
- ✦ Spot spraying with *glyphosate* (example: Roundup Pro®, Glyfos®, etc.) is effective in controlling Diffuse Knapweed. Spot application means the herbicide is applied only to the plants and not on the surrounding plants or soil. Spray each plant thoroughly on the stems and leaves enough to be wet but not dripping. Be aware that *Glyphosate* is non-selective, and will injure any plants that it comes in contact with, including grass. Apply either *glyphosate* anytime plants are actively growing.
- ✦ For selective control of knapweed in agricultural settings (pastures, hayfields, etc.): an herbicide containing the active ingredient *aminopyralid* (example: Milestone™, Milestone VM™, etc.) may be a preferred choice. *Aminopyralid* products will not harm grass and can be used around livestock provided all label precautions are followed. As with *glyphosate*, apply *aminopyralid* anytime plants are actively growing. For the most effective treatments, apply before plants bloom and produce seed. Applications of *aminopyralid* are also effective in the fall before a killing frost.
- ✦ When using herbicides, read and follow all label instructions and obey all label precautions. (Note: pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.)

