SHORT-FRINGED KNAPWEED

(Centaurea nigrescens Willd., C. dubia Suter in Flora of the Pacific Northwest)

Short-fringed knapweed, native to south central and eastern Europe, has naturalized in southern Australia, the northern United States and southern Canada. First discovered in eastern Canada in 1878, short-fringed knapweed has developed extensive stands in southern Ontario. British Columbia workers found short-fringed knapweed in 1966 on Vancouver Island. Oregon reported short-fringed knapweed near Odell, Hood River County in 1919. It still persists near Hood River. In Washington, short-fringed knapweed currently grows near Trout Lake, Klickitat County, and near Sullivan Lake, Pend Oreille County. Previous populations in Wahkiakum County, at Bingen, Klickitat County, and Manchester, Kitsap County, Washington; and Idaho County, Idaho, apparently have not persisted.

Short-fringed knapweed, also called Vochin knapweed, is a Class A noxious weed in Washington, but has not been classified as a noxious weed in Oregon or Idaho.

IDENTIFICATION

Short-fringed knapweed, a member of the thistle tribe (Cynareae) in the sunflower family (Asteraceae), grows to four feet tall from a woody root crown. Its multiple upright flower stalks branch from above the middle. Oblong lance-shaped lower leaves, entire or lobed, taper to a stalked base. In lobed leaves, the rounded terminal lobe often grows much larger than the other lobes. Smaller, less lobed upper leaves merely taper to the base, without a stalk. Minute stiff hairs line leaf margins.

Flower heads are single at the tips of the branches and more or less flat across the top of the branches; the outer flower heads open first. Flower heads grow about 1 1/2 to 3/4 inch tall. The outer flowers sometimes grow larger than the central flowers in

Lance-shaped leaves appear entire or variously lobed.

Numerous branched stems grow from a woody crown.

Fringes do not extend down the side of the long, slender, green bract.
the head. The lower portion of the head, made up of rows of bracts, is oblong, compared with the urn shape of diffuse and spotted knapweed heads. Small, dark triangular tipped bracts exhibit six to eight small fringes on each side, which do not taper along the side of the long slender green base of the bract. The flower’s rose-purple color may tinge the center of the bracts. Seeds are achenes about 1/8 inch long, light brown or ivory with lengthwise lines. If present, the plume consists of a few short stiff hairs opposite the oblique scar where the seed was attached.

 Entire or coarsely lobed leaves of short-fringed knapweed distinguish it from spotted and diffuse knapweed, which have finely divided leaves. The dark triangular tip on short-fringed knapweed bracts sets it apart from meadow knapweed.

**BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY**

A perennial, short-fringed knapweed reproduces by seed. Gardeners propagate it by root division. It flowers from July to September, releasing seed from August through winter. Seeds fall freely from the cup-shaped heads when the dried flowers that formed a plug are dislodged. The unplumed seeds, probably not moved by wind, fall near the parent plant unless carried by flowing water, vehicles or animals. In addition to unintentional seed movement, people transplanted short-fringed knapweed as an ornamental flower. It was first found in Australia in an old flower garden. In North America it grows along roadsides and irrigation ditches and in pastures, orchards and waste ground. All reports of short-fringed knapweed in the Pacific Northwest have come from cleared areas in forested regions. The weed adapts best to moist conditions but requires sunlight. Relatively coarse when mature, short-fringed knapweed probably ranks about the same as meadow knapweed and bighead knapweed in palatability to livestock. Thus, while livestock will graze it, it is not particularly desired as a forage species in pastures.

**CONTROL**

Eliminate small infestations by repeatedly digging all knapweed plants until you exhaust seed reserves in the soil. How long the seeds remain viable in the soil is unknown. Although the woody crown of short-fringed knapweed is too stout for hand pulling, you may successfully remove it using hand tools such as shovels, pulaskis or grub hoes. Dig out as much of the root as possible and return to remove plants that regrow from missed fragments. Short-fringed knapweed does not persist on annually cultivated land. For larger populations on tillable land, control short-fringed knapweed by cultivating repeatedly, then reseeding to desired pasture species. If short-fringed knapweed responds like other perennial knapweeds, mowing will neither control it nor prevent seed production.

For chemical control recommendations, refer to the *Pacific Northwest Weed Control Handbook*, an annually revised extension publication available from the extension bulletin offices of Oregon State University, Washington State University and the University of Idaho.

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