Weed of the Month: Russian Knapweed

Greetings, nature enthusiasts! Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, aimed at shedding light on the invasive plants that threaten our local ecosystems. This month, we turn our attention to Russian Knapweed (Rhaponticum repens), a formidable adversary in the battle for healthy habitats.

Identification:

Len Russian Knapweed, also known as Acroptilon repens or Centaurea repens, is a perennial herbaceous plant that can reach heights of up to three feet. It boasts lance-shaped leaves with toothed edges, and its stems are covered in fine, silvery hairs. The flowers, which bloom in late spring to early summer, are a striking lavender-pink color and resemble thistles.

Top Left- Flower of Russian Knapweed: Size ranges around 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter

Top Right - Full body of Russian Knapweed in blooming stage

Invasive Behavior:

Russian Knapweed, also known as Centaurea repens, is a perennial herbaceous plant that can reach heights of up to three feet. It boasts lance-shaped leaves with toothed edges, and its stems are covered in fine, silvery hairs. The flowers, which bloom in late spring to early summer, are a striking lavender-pink color and resemble thistles.
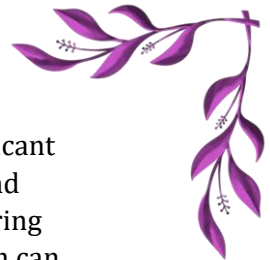

Middle Left- Seeds of Russian Knapweed without hairs

Bottom Left- Example of flowerhead after expelling its seeds

Bottom Right - Example of seeds with residual hairs and flowers of Russian Knapweed

Impact:
The presence of Russian Knapweed can lead to significant ecological disruption. Its dense stands outcompete and displace native plants, reducing biodiversity and altering habitats. Moreover, its deep and extensive root system can deplete soil moisture, impacting neighboring plants and potentially exacerbating soil erosion.

Left- Rosette form of young Russian Knapweed

Right - Fine silver hairs of Russian Knapweed's stem

Control and Management:
Effectively managing Russian Knapweed requires a concerted effort. Early detection and swift action are paramount. Mechanical methods, like mowing or hand-pulling, can be effective for smaller infestations. In more established populations, targeted herbicide application may be necessary, though careful consideration must be given to minimizing collateral damage to non-target species.

Prevention:
Preventing the spread of Russian Knapweed is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. When hiking or traveling through areas known to be infested, be sure to clean footwear, clothing, and equipment to avoid unwittingly spreading seeds. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at **(530) 822-7500**. Currently, this weed has been spotted in various places throughout Sutter County and county staff are working to eradicate the infestation.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Russian Knapweed and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Russian Knapweed, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at:
https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/acroptilon-repens-profile/
For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at:
https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office