



Weed of the Month: Diffuse Knapweed

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Diffuse Knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.

Identification:

Diffuse Knapweed is a bushy herbaceous, tap rooted, biennial, or short-lived perennial that grows to about 3 ft tall. The leaves are alternate and covered with short grayish hairs. This plant produces highly branched flowering stems in the late spring/ summer with pink to pale purple disk flowers.



Left- Diffuse Knapweed Flower

Right - Full Diffuse Knapweed Plants



Invasive Behavior:

Diffuse Knapweed is a pioneer species that can quickly invade disturbed and undisturbed grassland. Replacing wildlife and livestock forage. This weed contains allelopathic compounds which suppress the growth of other plant species. When flowers are mature, the plants dry up and break off at ground level, becoming tumbleweeds. Ripe seed heads break off as the plants roll in the wind, enabling them to disperse seeds along great distances.



Left- Invasion of Diffuse Knapweed on range land

Right - Flower of Diffuse Knapweed maturing



Impact:

This Plant will rapidly take over the disturbed areas. Knapweed infestations can increase soil surface run-off and sedimentation of streams. Diffuse Knapweed has little value as forage for cattle and limited seasonal value for big game. Infestations increase production costs for ranchers, decrease plant diversity and wildlife habitat and increase soil erosion and wildfire rates.

Control and Management:

Individual plants can be pulled or dug up. There is usually a large seed bank, so continued monitoring and removal of new plants is essential. For other control methods and more information, see the resources listed below.

Left- Knapweed species are distinguished by the type of bracts (leaf like structures) that surround the base of the flowerheads.

Right - another example of a full plant



Prevention:

Preventing the spread of Diffuse Knapweed is key to its management. Prevent plants from maturing and going to seed. 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.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Diffuse 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 Diffuse Knapweed, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at:

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/terrestrial/plants/diffuse-knapweed>

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



