



## Weed of the Month: Perennial Pepperweed (Tall Whitetop)

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 perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



### **Identification:**

Perennial pepperweed, also known as tall whitetop, is a long-lived herbaceous perennial. It is a member of the mustard family and displays small white flowers in dense clusters. At its maturity, it produces stems that range from two feet to over four feet long along with many erect semi woody stems. Perennial pepperweed also forms large, interconnected roots that are long and minimally branched. It gets the name tall whitetop from its profusion of white flowers.

### **Invasive Behavior:**

Originating from Southeastern Europe and Asia, perennial pepperweed has become very invasive in many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including flood plains, irrigation structures, pastures, wetlands, riparian areas, roadsides, and residential areas. It spreads by root fragments and seed dispersal.

### **Impact:**

The presence of perennial pepperweed can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The plant rapidly forms dense populations that take over impacted areas displacing desirable vegetation. This results in low forage quality in hay pasture causing concern for growers as well as ranchers because it is toxic to horses. Once it is established, perennial pepperweed is difficult to control in agricultural land and natural areas.

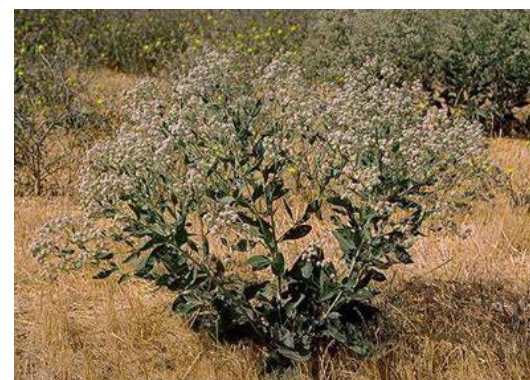
Top Left- perennial pepperweed infestation.

Middle Right – perennial pepperweed flower head.



Bottom Left- perennial pepperweed seed.

Bottom Right- perennial pepperweed at adult stage.





**Control and Management:**

Eradication of perennial pepperweed is a long-term commitment. Its extensive root system is the biggest target in effective elimination. Cultural control can be an effective approach to the prevention of perennial pepperweed establishment. Practices may include implementing vigorous sod forming grasses, alfalfa, or cropping systems that require annual tillage. Chemical controls also prove to be effective and often require repetition over the course of several years. In this case, the most important target is resprouting shoots and seedlings. For the best results with established populations, mowing or burning prior to application is key. This practice should be used judiciously to minimize impact on non-target species.

Top Left- Perennial pepperweed rosette.

Bottom Left- Adult Perennial pepperweed leaves.

**Prevention:**

Preventing the spread of perennial pepperweed is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area.



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

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/lepidium-latifolium-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

