



Weed of the Month: Spotted 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 Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



Identification:

Spotted Knapweed is a biennial or short-lived perennial with a stout taproot. It produces pinkish purple or cream flower heads that form in clusters and have bracts that individually have a dark spot located on the top. It is very similar to Russian Knapweed but can be identified by the dark spots in the bract tips.

Top Left- Close up image of a mature Spotted Knapweed bud.

Middle Right- Spotted Knapweed flower heads in flower and bud stage.

Invasive Behavior:

Originating from Europe, Spotted Knapweed has become very invasive to many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including rangeland, roadsides, ditch banks, and other disturbed areas. Once established, Spotted Knapweed grows in both dry and moist open soil with adequate light.



Impact:

Spotted Knapweed can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The plant crowds out other native plants and reduces forage availability for livestock. Due to its toxicity to both equine and livestock, it poses challenges for farmers and ranchers. Spotted Knapweed seed may be produced and spread but lays dormant in the soil until it is ready to germinate and can rapidly take over. Because of its strong taproot system, it can take extensive time and effort to eliminate.

Middle Left- Spotted Knapweed at the adult stage with flowering buds.

Bottom Right- Spotted Knapweed seeds.





Control and Management:

Effectively managing Spotted Knapweed is a long process. It can take several years to eliminate an established population. Mechanical methods include cultivation and digging with a shovel. To be effective, this must take place through removing the crown frequently. Herbicides may be necessary for established populations and should be applied during early development stages and before buds are formed for best results. This practice should be used judiciously to minimize impact on non-target species.

Prevention:

Preventing the spread of Spotted Knapweed 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.

Top Left- Rosette stage of young Spotted Knapweed.

Middle Right- Close up image of Spotted Knapweed leaves.



By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Spotted 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 Spotted Knapweed, feel free to visit the UC Weed Research and Information Center website at: https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/natural%20areas/wr_C/Centaurea_stoebe.pdf

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

