



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
(360) 354-3990 www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds

HAIRY WILLOW-HERB

Epilobium hirsutum

THREAT: Hairy willow-herb, a native to Eurasia, has been introduced to areas in the northeast U.S. and some locations in Washington. This aggressive plant spreads quickly by rhizomes and seed, and can form stands excluding most other vegetation. Hairy willow-herb invades moist areas, such as low pastures, ditch banks, wetlands, stream banks and moist fields. In Washington, it is most common in Whatcom County, where it is often found along ditches. It can compete with purple loosestrife, another notorious wetland invader, and can outcompete many native plants. Once established, hairy willow-herb can spread into adjoining undisturbed sites.

DESCRIPTION: Hairy willow-herb is a perennial herb, related to fireweed, growing up to 6 feet tall. The stems are erect and the plants are covered with soft hairs. The leaves are opposite, lance-shaped and toothed. Hairy willow-herb has showy rose-purple flowers that grow from leaf axils, near the top of the plant. Flowers have four notched petals and four sepals, and are about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch across. Flowering occurs in July and August and the seeds are dispersed by the wind. Thick underground rhizomes allow the plant to spread vegetatively.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Control options for hairy willow-herb are not well known. Small infestations may be hand dug, but care must be taken to remove as many rhizome fragments as possible. Sites must be checked for regrowth from missed root fragments. Mowing may be an option to prevent seed production but will not kill the plant. For more control information, contact the weed control board.

