



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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BIGHEAD KNAPWEED

Centaurea macrocephala

THREAT: Bighead knapweed is an invasive relative of thistle and is native to the Caucasus Mountains and Turkey. It was probably introduced as a garden ornamental and is still marketed by some nurseries under names such as lemon fluff and globe centaury. Bighead knapweed reproduces only by seed, which can be spread by wind, people and animals. It can spread from ornamental plantings into nearby meadows, sod and disturbed areas.

DESCRIPTION: Bighead knapweed is a perennial, growing up to 5 feet tall. Multiple unbranched stems grow from a woody crown, with a long taproot. The leaves are broadly lance-shaped, with rough surfaces, sharply pointed tips and shallowly toothed margins. The lower leaves may grow up to 10 inches long and 3 inches wide, but become smaller as they go up the stem. Bighead knapweed flowers in mid-summer, producing large yellow flowerheads, which measure about 3 inches across. Each flowerhead may produce 200 seeds.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Bighead knapweed can be controlled using cultural, mechanical and chemical control. It can be controlled with repeated cultivation and, for small infestations, hand digging is also effective. Herbicides may also be used, in appropriate situations. To be effective, control work must be continued, as needed, throughout several growing seasons. Contact the weed control board for chemical recommendations.



