



Whatcom Weeds

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

DYER'S WOAD

Isatis tinctoria

THREAT: Dyers woad was cultivated in southeast Russia as a source of blue dye as early as the 13th century. It was first introduced to the eastern United States by colonists as a dye plant, and now has invaded extensive areas of rangeland in Utah, Wyoming, Montana, California and Oregon. Dyers woad is designated a Class A noxious weed in Whatcom County because of its invasive nature and limited distribution. Reports of dyers woad reappearing after tillage suggests that seed may stay viable in the soil for many years. With each plant capable of producing 350-500 seeds, it threatens both native plant communities and rangeland. Vehicles, flowing water, animals, feed, bedding and crop seed all contribute to long distance dispersal, while wind and rain detach fruit and distribute it for shorter distances.

DESCRIPTION: Dyers woad, a member of the mustard family, is a winter annual, biennial or short-lived perennial. It is bluish-green, growing 1-3 feet tall with a 3-5 foot taproot. Leaves are smooth and have a cream colored midrib on the upper surface, from the base to leaf tip. Similar to other mustards, dyers woad has small yellow flowers with 4 petals. The flowers grow in clusters on the branched upper portions of the stem. It establishes first in disturbed areas and thrives in light sandy and gravelly soils.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Prevention of new dyers woad infestations through careful monitoring, especially when moving animals or equipment from infested areas, is the best control. In already established communities, do not let it go to seed. Hand pull or dig individual plants in small or scattered infestations. Repeated mowing that prevents seed production until seed reserves are completely depleted may also be effective. Breaking or cutting the tops does not kill dyers woad; it will regrow and produce seed later in the season. A pathogen, *Puccinia thlaspeos*, may have potential as a biological control agent. Chemical control at appropriate growth stages may also be effective; contact the Weed Control Board for site-specific recommendations.

