



# 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](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pubwks/noxious/noxious/htm)

## GOATSRUE

*Galega officinalis*

**THREAT:** Goatsrue, native to the middle east, was intentionally introduced to North America as potential livestock forage but was found to be unpalatable and toxic to livestock. It invades cropland, pastures, fencelines, roadways and riparian areas. Due to its unpalatable nature, this weed can spread quickly in grazed areas, as the livestock avoid it and graze down competing species. The seeds are spread by water, farm equipment, animal manure, contaminated seed and soil moving equipment, and probably remain viable in the soil for 5 to 10 years.

**DESCRIPTION:** Goatsrue is a member of the pea family. It is a perennial with multiple stems growing from a deep taproot. Although it usually grows to a height of about three feet, it can grow as tall as six feet. The compound leaves consist of 5 to 8 pairs of leaflets. The flowers are purple, blue or white and bloom in clusters at the end of the stems. The seeds are borne in pods, containing 1 to 9 seeds, with a single plant capable of producing thousands of pods. The seedpods are narrow, round and slightly more than an inch long.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Goatsrue can be controlled using mechanical or chemical methods. For small infestations, plants can be dug, although care must be taken to remove the entire root. In agricultural fields, alternate cropping and row cropping usually disrupts the life cycle of this plant. Goatsrue can also be controlled using herbicides. All these treatments require follow-up work to remove any surviving plants before they have the opportunity to set seed.

**Note:** Goatsrue is also the common name given to another member of the pea family, *Tephrosia virginiana*, which is a native plant of North America.

