



Invasive Species Council of Manitoba

By Sandi Faber Routley, Invasive Species Council of Manitoba

Spotted Knapweed is an invasive species that was recently reported to us by the public in the Pine Ridge Hollow area of Birds Hill and is on our primary target list for ISCM's early detection rapid response program for control. We hope to receive more public reports on this invader.

Weed to Spot: The Knapweeds

The Invasive Species Council of Manitoba is concerned with the spread of Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) and Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) in Manitoba. Knapweeds have a major economic impact on pastures and forage production across North America. These two species are biennial to short-lived perennials and native to Eastern Europe. Diffuse knapweed is growing in the Morden region, while Spotted Knapweed was recently discovered in the Beasejour, Sprague, and Birds Hill areas. However, these infestations are small, and under an early detection and rapid response program are still possible to control and eradicate. It is highly encouraged that any suspected sightings be reported immediately to **ISCM** or your local weed supervisor.

Both knapweeds grow to around 1 meter in height, and have a taproot and hairy, deeply-cut leaves. Diffuse flowers are white (sometimes pink) with sharp, rigid spines on the flowerhead bracts that are translucent in appearance. Plants have greyish-green leaves and a single upright stem. Spotted knapweed has purple flowers and a black-tipped fringe on the bracts which give the flower a "spotted" appearance. Plants can have one or more upright stems.



Diffuse knapweed flower. Photo
Credit: USDA APHIS PPQ



Spotted knapweed flower.
Photo Credit: M. Ammeter

Similar in appearance to Diffuse knapweed, Spotted knapweed is also a highly competitive invasive species. It can release growth-suppressing chemicals in the soil to inhibit the growth of native species and agricultural crops. Both species reduce forage production for livestock and wildlife and increase soil erosion. Knapweeds spread by wind, livestock and people, preferring open areas and well-drained soils where they establish in grasslands, open forests, and along roadsides. Spotted is more intolerant to dense shade and prefers moister habitats. Diffuse knapweed cannot tolerate cultivation or excessive moisture and is more common on open grassland or pasture sites.

Knapweed-contaminated hay or seeds caught in vehicle undercarriages often contribute to their spread.

Report knapweeds to **ISCM**: info@invasivespeciesmanitoba.com, (204) 232-6021 or visit www.invasivespeciesmanitoba.com.