

Summit County Weeds

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Photographs and information courtesy of the Colorado Weed Management Association
cwma.org

Absinth Wormwood



- Asteraceae - Sunflower family
- Perennial forb or herb, dying back to ground every year, has strong sage odor
- 3-5 ft tall Flowers small, yellow, inconspicuous, numerous 1/8in wide
- Flowers late July-August
- Stems arise from taproot, as many as 20 or more, covered with fine silky hairs
- Leaves divided into deeply lobed leaflets, light to olive green, 2-5 in long
- Fruit one seed, 1/16in or less long, smooth, flattened and light gray-brown in color
- Taproot up to 2 in wide with shallow lateral branches
- Reduces available forage, tainting milk of cattle
- Strong medicinal odor

Black Henbane

Black Henbane, a member of the nightshade family, may be an annual or biennial and grows from 1 to 3 feet tall. The leaves are coarsely-toothed to shallowly lobed and pubescent. Flowers, blooming along the long racemes, are brownish-yellow with a purple center and purple veins. The plant has a foul odor.



Black Henbane is a native of Europe and has been cultivated as an ornamental.

It has spread throughout the United States and is a common weed of pastures, fence rows, roadsides, and waste areas. Black Henbane contains hyoscyamine and other alkaloids which can cause livestock poisoning. It is considered a poisonous plant to humans.

****If you see this plant, please notify the Weed Program.**

Bull Thistle

Bull Thistle is a biennial with a short, fleshy taproot. The stem is 2 to 5 feet tall, bearing many spreading branches. It is green or brownish, sparsely hairy, irregularly and spiny winged. Leaves in the first year form a rosette, stem leaves are pinnately lobed, hairy and prickly on upper side and cottony underneath. Flowers are 1-1/2 to 2 inches wide, more or less clustered at the ends of branches. Involucral bracts are narrow, spine-tipped, progressively longer and narrower from outer to inner ones, flowers dark purple. Seeds are topped by a circle of plum-like white hairs.



Canada Thistle

Canada Thistle is a member of the aster or sunflower family. Canada thistle was introduced from Europe. It is a creeping perennial which reproduces by seeds and fleshy, horizontal roots. The erect stem is hollow, smooth and slightly hairy, 1 to 5 feet tall, simple, and branched at the top.

The leaves are set close on the stem, slightly clasping, and dark green. Leaf shape varies widely from oblong to lance-shaped. Sharp spines are numerous on the outer edges of the leaves and on the branches and main stem of the plant. The flowers are small and compact, about 3/4-inch or less in diameter, and light pink to rose-purple in color, occasionally white. The seeds are oblong, flattened, dark brown, and approximately 1/8-inch long.



Canada Thistle emerges in April or May in most parts of Colorado. It is one of the most widespread and economically damaging noxious weeds in Colorado. Infestations are found in cultivated fields, riparian areas, pastures, rangeland, forests, lawns and gardens, roadsides, and in waste areas. Because of its seeding habits, vigorous growth, and extensive underground root system, control or eradication is difficult. It is distributed across Colorado from 4,000 to 9,500 feet.



Chinese Clematis

- Ranunculaceae - Buttercup family
- Perennial herb or woody climbing vine
- Flowers single, yellow
- Flowers July-October
- Seedheads fluffy
- Stems 10-15ft long, gray-brown bark, climbing on rocks, fences, bushes and trees
- Roots 5-10 ft Long
- Found in diverse habitats including, forests, riverbanks, sandy gullies and rocky outcroppings



Common Mullein



Mullein is a biennial that produces a large, thick rosette of fuzzy leaves the first year and a single, stout, erect stem, 2 to 6 feet tall, the second year. The leaves are alternate, overlapping one another, light green, and densely woolly.



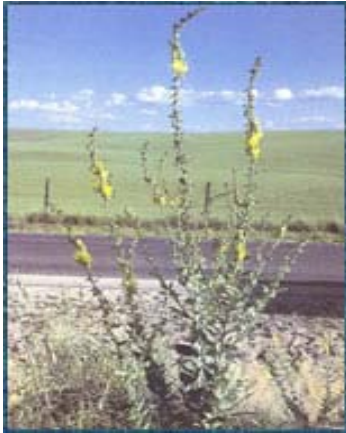
Flowers are arranged in long terminal spikes and are sulfur yellow. Flowering and seed production occurs from June to August. This weed was introduced from Europe, but is a native of Asia and is common throughout the temperate areas of North America. It is found along river bottoms, pastures, meadows, fence rows and disturbed areas. It is especially prevalent on gravelly soils.

Common Tansy

Common Tansy, an escaped ornamental, is a perennial plant, from 1 1/2 feet to 6 feet tall with showy button-like flowers. Originally imported from Europe as an ornamental, this member of the sunflower family has now become widely established on the western slope of Colorado. Reproducing by both seed and rootstock, Tansy is difficult to control. Tansy is particularly aggressive when growing along irrigation ditches where it can restrict water flow. It has been utilized as a medicinal herb and tea. Common Tansy is sometimes mistaken for Tansy Ragwort, a poisonous plant. Alternatives to planting tansy include tall Yellow Yarrow (*Achillea filipendula*) and Woolly Cinquefoil (*Potentilla hippiana*).



Dalmatian Toadflax



Dalmatian Toadflax is a member of the figwort family. It was introduced as an ornamental from Europe, and is now rapidly invading dry rangeland from 5,000 to 6,500 feet. It is a creeping perennial that closely resembles Yellow Toadflax. The leaves are waxy, heart-shaped, and clasp the stem. The stems are from 2 to 4 feet tall. The flowers are snapdragon-shaped, bright yellow, sometimes with orange centers.



Dalmatian toadflax is especially well adapted to arid sites and can spread rapidly once established. Because of its deep, extensive root system, waxy leaf, and heavy seed production, this plant is difficult to manage.

Dame's Rocket



Dame's Rocket is sold occasionally by local nurseries, and is found in "wildflower" seed mixes. It is also known as Dame's Violet. This persistent plant has escaped cultivation and become a problem throughout Colorado, including the Boulder foothills area and the Roaring Fork Valley of Western Colorado.



This native of Europe may be either a biennial or perennial, and may be from 1-1/2 to 4 feet tall, with flowers ranging in color from white to pink to purple. A member of the mustard family, Dame's Rocket flowers from April through July. Dame's Rocket tend to invade riparian and wetland habitat. There are many alternatives to planting Dame's Rocket, including Blue Columbine (*Aquilegia caerulea*) and Lavender Native Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa menthaefolia*).

Diffuse Knapweed

Diffuse Knapweed is a member of the aster family, Thistle Tribe. Diffuse Knapweed was introduced from Europe and is a biennial or short-lived perennial forb which reproduces only by seed. The plant usually produces a single main much-branched stem that is 1-1/2 to 2 feet tall. It is known to have more than one stem produced from one rosette. A basal rosette of leaves is present in young plants with each leaf divided into narrow segments.



When leaves are young, a thin nap is present. Stem leaves in the mature plant become much reduced as you ascend to the tip and alternate one per node. Flowers are mostly white, sometimes purple, and are located on each branch tip. The bracts surrounding each flower bear 4 to 5 pairs of lateral spines and one, long terminal spine.

Diffuse Knapweed can resemble spotted knapweed with the black tipped bracts. The difference is the sharp spine at the end of the bract that is characteristic of Diffuse Knapweed.

Diffuse Knapweed can be found in pastures, riparian areas, roadsides, and waste areas in Colorado. It is a tough competitor on dry sites and rapidly invades and dominates disturbed areas. It is widespread and increasing in the state, particularly along the Front Range.

Field Bindweed



Field Bindweed is a problem throughout Colorado. It is one of the most competitive perennial weeds. A two or three-year food supply is stored in the extensive underground root system.

This makes it hard to kill by cultivation because roots will live as long as their food reserve lasts. Seeds can also stay viable in the soil for up to 40 years. It is widespread in cultivated areas, pastures, lawns, gardens, roadsides, and waste areas throughout Colorado from 4,000 to 8,000 feet.



Hoary Cress

Hoary Cress, a member of the mustard family, was probably introduced from Europe in alfalfa seed. It is a creeping perennial which reproduces by seed and creeping roots. The extensive root system spreads horizontally and vertically with frequent shoots arising from the root stock. It grows erect from 10 to 18 inches high and has a white color.



The alternate leaves clasp the stem and are oval or oblong with toothed or almost smooth margins. The leaves are often covered with very fine white hairs. Each leaf is 1/2 to 2 inches long with blunt ends. The flowers are white, 1/8 inch across, and numerous in compact flat-top clusters which give the plant its name. Each heart-shaped seed pod contains two oval, finely pitted, red-brown seeds each about 1/12 inch long.

Hoary Cress is one of the earliest perennial weeds to emerge in the spring. Flowers are produced in late April and May. It grows in waste places, cultivated fields, and pastures, and is capable of vigorous grow on the irrigated, alkaline soils of the West. It is a major problem in certain pastures and cultivated areas in Colorado from 3,500 to 8,500 feet.

Houndstongue



Houndstongue is a member of the borage family. It is a biennial that is introduced from Europe. It reproduces by seeds and appears as a leafy rosette in its first year. The stem is erect, stout, heavy, 1-1/2 to 3 feet high, usually branched above. The leaves are alternate, the basal and lower ones are broad, and are oblong to lance-shaped. The upper leaves are narrower and pointed, almost clasping. The flowers are terminal and reddish-purple in color. The fruit consists of four nutlets (seeds), each about 1/3 inch long, with the outer surface covered with short, barbed prickles. Nutlets break apart at maturity and are rapidly scattered by animals.

Houndstongue grows in ranges, pastures, and roadsides. Houndstongue is toxic to horses and cattle. The weed contains alkaloids that may cause liver cells to stop reproducing.



Leafy Spurge

Leafy Spurge, a member of the spurge family, was introduced from Europe. It is a creeping perennial which reproduces by seed and extensive creeping roots. The roots can extend as deep as 30 feet and are extremely wide spreading. The shoots grow erect, 1 to 3 feet high, are pale green and unbranched except for flower clusters. Leaves are alternate, narrowly linear with smooth margins, about 1/4 inch wide, and 1 to 4 inches long. The small yellow-green flowers are enclosed by a pair of yellowish-green, heart-shaped bracts. The bracts have the appearance of flowers. The pods are three-seeded. The plant, including the root, has milky latex that is damaging to eyes and sensitive skin.



Leafy Spurge is an extremely difficult plant to control because of its extensive sprouting root system and is probably the most serious noxious weed threat in Colorado. It is one of the four weeds that must be managed statewide in accordance with the Colorado Weed Management Act. It is adapted to a wide variety of habitats in the state and is very competitive with other plant species. If it becomes established in rangeland, pasture, and riparian sites, it may exclude all other vegetation due to its competitive nature. Although it is unpalatable to cattle, sheep and goats eat spurge, do well on it, and are useful biocontrol tools.

Musk Thistle

Musk Thistle is a member of the aster family, thistle tribe.

It is an introduced biennial, winter annual, or rarely annual which reproduces by seed. The first year's growth is a large, compact rosette from a large, fleshy, corky taproot. The second year stem is erect, spiny, 2 to 6 feet tall and branched at the top. The leaves are alternate, deeply cut or lobed with five points per lobe, very spiny, 3 to 6 inches long and extend (clasp) down the stem. The waxy leaves are dark green with a light green midrib and mostly white margins.



The large and showy flowers are terminal, flat, nodding, 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 inches broad, purple, rarely white, and surrounded by numerous, lance-shaped, spine-tipped bracts. Blooms appear in late May and June and set seed in June or July. Seeds are straw-colored and oblong.

Musk Thistle is commonly found in pastures, roadsides, and waste places. It prefers moist, bottom land soil, but can be found on drier uplands, also. It is becoming an increasing problem throughout Colorado, particularly along the Front Range.

Myrtle Spurge

Myrtle Spurge is a highly invasive ornamental plant that is popular in xeriscapes and rock gardens in residential areas of Colorado. This plant is rapidly expanding into sensitive ecosystems, displacing native vegetation and reducing forage for wildlife.

It is a low-growing perennial with trailing stems of fleshy blue-green alternate leaves. Flowers are inconspicuous, surrounded by yellow-green flower-like bracts that appear from March to May. Myrtle Spurge reproduces only by seed and is capable of projecting seeds up to 15 feet.

This plant exudes toxic, milky latex, which can cause severe skin irritations. Wearing gloves long sleeves, and shoes is highly recommended when in contact with Myrtle Spurge, as all plant parts are considered poisonous.

Alternatives to planting myrtle spurge include native plants such as Sulphur Flower (*Erigeron umbellatum*) or Kinikinnick (*Artocostaphylos uva-ursi*).

****If you see this plant, please notify the Weed Program.**



Orange Hawkweed



A member of the sunflower family, Orange Hawkweed is a fibrous rooted perennial herb that grows up to 12 inches tall. The leaves are basal with 1 or 2 small leaves occasionally occurring on the bristly stem. The plant contains a milky juice. It has 5 to 35 flower heads. The strap-shaped flowers are red-orange with notched tips. Yellow Hawkweed (*Hieracium pratense*) is similar in appearance to Orange Hawkweed.

Orange Hawkweed can also be found in Jefferson, Larimer, Eagle, Gunnison and Pitkin Counties.

****If you see this plant, please notify the Weed Program.**



Oxeye Daisy

Oxeye Daisy, a member of the sunflower family, is an erect perennial plant with white ray and yellow disk flowers which bloom from June through August. A native of Eurasia, this aggressive plant has escaped cultivation and become a troublesome weed in the Intermountain West. Oxeye Daisy is still commonly sold in wildflower seed mixes or transplanted as an ornamental despite its tendency to crowd out more desirable vegetation.



This plant is designated as a noxious weed in the state of Wyoming and Colorado. Alternatives to planting Oxeye Daisy include: native daisies (*Erigeron* spp), Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia aristata*).

Perennial Pepperweed

Perennial Pepperweed or Tall Whitetop is a member of the mustard family. It was introduced from either Southern Europe or Western Asia. It is a deep-rooted perennial plant with an extensive, vigorous creeping root system which reproduces by seed root stalks. Perennial Pepperweed is similar to Whitetop, however, it is taller. Perennial Pepperweed stands 3 to 5 feet high with a heavy, sometimes woody, crown. The lower leaves are oblong with toothed margins. The upper leaves do not clasp the stem as Whitetop. Flowers are white.

Perennial Pepperweed can be found in pastures, riparian areas, roadsides, and waste places. It has a limited range in north and south central Colorado from 5,500 to 8,000 feet.



Plumeless Thistle



Plumeless Thistle is a member of the aster family, thistle tribe. It is an introduced winter annual or biennial. This plant can be distinguished from Musk Thistle by its smaller flowers 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter.



The leaves of Plumeless Thistle lack the prominent white margin present on Musk thistle leaves. The plant may grow to a height of 5 feet or more. Flowers are reddish-purple and are either solitary or clustered. Taproots are large and fleshy.

Plumeless Thistle is an extremely prolific seed producer. It is found in pastures, river valleys, and along roadsides. It is rapidly increasing in this state, particularly in Northwestern Colorado (Pitkin, Garfield, and Eagle Counties).

Purple Loosetrife



- Lythraceae - Loosetrife Family
- Perennial forb
- 6-8ft tall
- Flowers purple with 5-7 petals in long racemes
- Flowers 8-10 weeks after germination
- Distinctive 4-sided stem
- Leaves are lance shaped with smooth edges
- Escaped ornamental that prefers stream banks, shallow ponds, and wetlands. Is sometimes confused with native fireweed
- Once established will displace native wetland species and diminish wildlife habitat
- Plant may produce 2.5 million seeds annually
- Viable for up to 20 years
- Has been found in Colorado in limited areas



Poison Hemlock

Poison Hemlock is a member of the Parsnip family. It is a biennial introduced from Europe that may grow up to 9 feet tall. This plant, with a fleshy stout taproot, forms a rosette of fern-like, pinnately divided leaves during the first year of growth. Stems of poison hemlock have purple spots at all growth stages. The white flowers are borne in umbrella shaped clusters, each supported by a stalk.



Poison hemlock tends to get started along ditches and waterways, and will occur along the borders of pastures and crop land. All plant parts are poisonous to humans and most domestic livestock. According to legend this plant furnished the "cup of death" given to the Greek philosopher Socrates. Children have been poisoned by using the hollow stem as a whistle. Adults have been poisoned by mistaking the plant for parsley. This plant is most common in Colorado from 5,000 to 9,000 feet.



Russian Knapweed



Russian Knapweed is a member of the aster family, thistle tribe and is a creeping perennial introduced from Europe. It reproduces by seeds and creeping, horizontal roots. Roots, which are both vertical and horizontal in the soil, may or may not be black with a scaly appearance. The ridged stems are erect, rather stiff, branched, and one to three feet high. Young stems are covered with soft gray hairs or nap. The upper leaves are small and narrow with broken edges. Leaves attached midway up the stem have slightly toothed margins, while basal leaves are deeply notched. The flowers are thistle-like, solitary, terminal, 1/3 to 1/2 inch in diameter and lavender to white. The plant flowers in June to August and seed is produced in later summer to early fall.



Russian Knapweed is a serious noxious weed and is one of four plants that must be managed in accordance with the Colorado Weed Management Act. It is very difficult to control or eradicate once it becomes established. It grows in cultivated fields, along ditch banks, fence rows, roadsides, and in waste places. It is distributed throughout Colorado, except in Eastern Plains areas and is especially prevalent on the Western Slope from 4,500 to 7,500 feet. It is also very poisonous to horses.



Russian Olive

- Elaeagnaceae - Oleaster family
- Perennial shrub or small tree
- 10-40 ft tall
- Flowers yellowish-green
- Flowers May-June
- Stems with stiff woody thorns, may be reddish brown
- Leaves lance shaped, 1-3 in long, 3/8 to 1/4 in wide, light green



- Fruit resembles Olives, seed is a small stone, white or brown
- Roots extensive, suckers may come from roots
- Competes with native trees that provide nesting and roosting for birds
- Consumes water at higher rate than native trees
- Introduced as an ornamental and wind breaks. Escapes have become a serious weed problem along riparian corridors

Saltcedar

Saltcedar, also called tamarisk, was introduced from Eurasia and is now widespread in the United States. Saltcedar, a member of the Tamarisk family, is a deciduous or evergreen shrub or small tree that grows from 5 to 20 feet tall. The bark on saplings and stems is reddish-brown. Leaves are small and scale-like and the flowers are pink to white and 5-petaled.

Small flower tamarisk (*T. parviflora* DC.) is similar in appearance, but has 4-petaled flowers and the bark is brown to deep purple. Both species are used as ornamentals, but have escaped and can be found growing along streams, canals, and reservoirs in much of the Western United States.



One other species of Saltcedar to be aware of are *Tamarix chinensis*.

****If you see this plant, please notify the Weed Program.**

Scentless Chamomile



Scentless Chamomile, an escaped ornamental, is a bushy annual plant 1/2 to 2 feet tall with showy, twelve-petaled white flowers. It is nearly identical in appearance to the strong scented species, but can be easily distinguished by its lack of odor. This member of the sunflower family flowers from May to October. Imported from Europe as an ornamental, Scentless Chamomile now grows worldwide.

The plant has become established in Aspen, Breckenridge, and Vail as well as other mountainous regions in Colorado. Scentless Chamomile has no forage value and can cause blistering of muzzles, irritation of mucous membranes, and skin rashes in livestock. Alternatives include Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*), Cutleaf Daisy (*Erigeron compositus*) or native daisies.



Scotch Thistle

- Asteraceae - Sunflower Family
- Biennial forb
- 18in-10ft tall
- Flowers large, 1-2 in wide, globe shaped, violet to reddish, 2-3 on branch tips, with spiny, needle-like bracts below
- Flowers June-August



- Stems upright, with broad spiny wings, entire plant is finely hairy to woolly
- leaves are bluish or grayish-green and toothed with spines
- Fruit has a parachute-like structure, seeds small
- Taproot, stout, fleshy
- May form stands too dense for livestock to walk through



Spotted Knapweed



Spotted Knapweed is a member of the aster family, thistle tribe. Native to central Europe, it is a simple perennial that reproduces from seed and forms a new shoot each year from a taproot. The plant can have one or more shoots up to 4 feet tall. Rosette leaves can be six inches long and deeply lobed. Leaves on shoots are smaller and finely divided, becoming smaller toward the top of the shoot, and are covered with fine hair. Flowering heads are solitary and occur on shoot tips. They are up to one inch in diameter. Flower color usually is lavender to purple. Seed head bracts are stiff and black tipped, with five to seven pairs of short, feathery appendages. Seeds germinate in spring or fall. Perennial plants resume growth in early spring and bolt at approximately the same time as Diffuse Knapweed. Flowering occurs throughout the summer into fall.



Spotted Knapweed occupies dry meadows, pasture land, stony hills, roadsides, and the sandy or gravelly flood plains of streams and rivers, where soils are light textured, well drained, and receive summer precipitation. Spotted Knapweed tolerates dry conditions, similar to Diffuse Knapweed, but will survive in higher moisture areas as well. This plant is one of four weeds that must be managed statewide in accordance with the Colorado Weed Management Act.

Sulfur Cinquefoil

Sulfur Cinquefoil, a member of the Rose family, is a perennial growing up to 1-1/2 feet tall. It has a well developed rootstock. Leaves palmately compound have 5 to 7 toothed leaflets on each leaf. Leaves are sparsely hairy and appear green on the underside rather than silvery as in many *Potentilla* species. Flowers are light yellow with 5 petals, each flower producing numerous single-seeded oval achenes.



Sulfur cinquefoil is often found in disturbed areas such as roadsides and pastures. Colonies of plants are also seen in undisturbed sites.

**If you see this plant, please notify the Weed Program.

Yellow Toadflax



Yellow Toadflax, sometimes called Common Toadflax and Butter and Eggs, resembles the Snapdragon in appearance and is a member of the figwort family. It was introduced from Europe as an ornamental and has now become a serious problem to rangeland and mountain meadows. It is a perennial reproducing from seed, as well as from underground root stalk. The stems of Yellow Toadflax are from 8 inches to 2 feet tall and leafy. Leaves are pale green, alternate, narrow, and pointed at both ends. The flowers are bright yellow with deep orange centers. These flowers are about an inch long and blossom in dense clusters along the stem as it lengthens and grows. The fruit is round, about 1/4 inch in diameter, brown, and contains many seeds.

Yellow Toadflax emerges in April and May in most parts of Colorado. It is adapted to a variety of site conditions, from moist to dry and does well in all types of soils. Its displacement of desirable grasses not only reduces ecological diversity, it also reduces rangeland value and can lead to erosion problems. Because of its early vigorous growth, extensive underground root system, and effective seed dispersal methods, Yellow Toadflax is difficult to control.



Wild Caraway



Wild caraway is a biennial, or occasionally a perennial, has one or more shoots emerging from a single taproot the second year. Shoots, normally hollow and 1 to 3 feet tall, are slender, erect, branching, and furrowed. Leaves are alternate on shoots and oblong or oval in outline; upper leaves are long and slender with a lacy appearance. Flowers are small, white or pinkish. Wild caraway was introduced into the United States as a cultivated species, but escaped to become a weed in mountain meadows, hayfields, and along irrigation ditches and roadways in these areas.