

Spotted knapweed

(*Centaurea stoebe*)



Key ID Features

Leaves: Bluish-green, hairy, and covered with shiny specks interspersed with translucent dots. 4-8 inches long. Alternate arrangement.

Flowers: Flowers from June-November. Each branch is topped by an egg-shaped flower bud covered with overlapping rows of dry, fringed green bracts with black tips. Flower is typically purple and sometimes white.

Fruit: Fruits appear from June-February. Tightly packed seed heads of oblong, brownish, hairy nutlets, 0.1 inch long, topped by short stubby bristles. A thousand seeds can be produced per plant.

Stem: Slender, stiff, and often branched upright stem with rough texture. Somewhat hairy.

Root: Deep, thick taproot allowing it to access water in dry soils. The root is tough and can persist after disturbance.

The Impact

Knapweeds have the potential to rapidly spread throughout introduced areas, displacing native vegetation and reducing the amount of available forage for wildlife and livestock. They may also degrade soil and water resources by increasing erosion and surface runoff. This plant rapidly colonizes roadsides and disturbed lands, especially dry sites. It can spread into adjacent undisturbed prairies and open forests. A highly prolific species spreading into the South by seeds equipped for dispersal by wind, water, livestock, wildlife, and human activity, with viability in the soil for many years.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Asteraceae

Origin: Europe and Asia

Habitat: Dry fields, roadsides, pastures, disturbed soils.

Present in Vermont?: Yes

Method of Spread: Prolific seed production, which is dispersed by wind, vehicles, animals, etc.

Phytotoxicity: Produces allelopathic chemicals which inhibit germination and growth of nearby native plants.



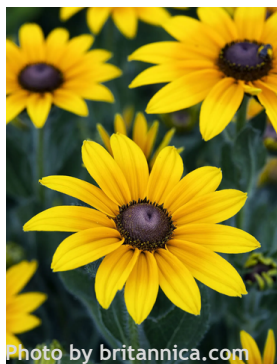
Common Look-alike

Field thistle (*Cirsium discolor*)



Distinguishing features: Flower bud bracts have silver stripe and a spine. Grows up to 2 meters. Leaves have a wooly underside.

Native Plant Alternatives



Black eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Beloved by pollinators and provides multitudes of benefit to wildlife.



Common Milkweed
(*Asclepias syriaca*)

Essential flowering plant for monarch butterflies as well as other native pollinators.

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on [VTinvasives.org](https://www.vtinvasives.org) and these additional resources:

[USDA NRCS Plant Guide](#), [NWCB control options](#)