

Hoary Cress White Top

Cardaria draba



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OTHER COMMON NAMES: heart-podded whitetop

DESCRIPTION

Whitetop is a long-lived rhizomatous perennial with two distinct leaf types. Its basal leaves are blue-green and lance shaped; the upper leaves have two lobes clasping the stem. Leaves are covered with fine white hairs that give the plant a grayish green appearance. White flowers are borne in clusters at the top of slender stalks that grow from 10 to 24 inches tall. Individual flowers are less than ¼ inch wide. They have four petals and six stamens. The flat-topped flower clusters may be several inches wide. Hoary cress has a ½ inch long heart-shaped seedpod, which is reddish brown and tipped with a small beak.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

Hoary cress whitetop looks very similar to globe-podded whitetop (*Cardaria pubescens*) and lens-podded whitetop (*Cardaria chalapensis*). These three exotics invade the same sites and are equally difficult to control. Please report all whitetop-like plants you find.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- white flowers with four petals, giving plant a white, flat-topped appearance
- leaves covered with fine white hair, giving a grayish green appearance

WHEN TO FIND WHITE TOP

White top is easiest to find in early May when flowering.

WHERE TO FIND WHITE TOP:

You can find whitetop along roadsides, ditch banks, and in many other unshaded disturbed areas.

WHAT TO DO

Please only pull white top early in the spring when plants are seedlings. Make sure to get the lateral and vertical roots. If fragments of the root remain, new plants will develop.

Hoary cress whitetop is native to Southwest Asia. It was introduced into the United States in the late 1800's, most likely via contaminated alfalfa seed. It is now abundant in Eastern Oregon and present in Jackson Co (SW Oregon).

Whitetop commonly grows in disturbed, alkaline soils with moderate moisture, but also does well in acidic soils with limited moisture. It reproduces by seed, which usually germinate in the fall and remain a rosette until the following spring. This early season growth reduces soil moisture and nutrients available to native species.

White top grows to be two ft tall, and produces lateral roots that sprout additional plants. In Oregon, it flowers in early May. Plants usually die back to roots in summer as seeds mature.

Common method of dispersal is through movement of root fragments in mud carried by livestock, vehicles and equipment. Seed dispersal is also commonly spread by hay and forage such as cut alfalfa and by flowing water.

Mechanical control in fall or early spring is appropriate for small seedling stands. Chemical control is difficult because desirable broad-leaved plants, both native and crop species, are often present.

REFERENCES

Kadmas, T and Johnson W.S., Managing Hoary Cress. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. Available on line at:
<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/FS02/FS0256.pdf>



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