



Brown Knapweed (*Centaurea jacea* L.)

Common Names: brown knapweed, rayed knapweed, brown centaury, horse-knobs, hardheads

Native Origin: Eurasia

Description: Brown knapweed is a perennial plant in the Aster family (Asteraceae) with a woody root crown that grows 20 to 48 inches tall, branching near the top. Basal leaves are up to 6 inches long, tapering at both ends with the broadest part above the middle of the leaf. Stem leaves are lance-shaped, shallowly-lobed and stalkless. The stem is ridged and sometimes purple-striped. The 3/4-to-one inch, light to dark brown heads are found at the ends of the branches. The somewhat hairy bracts are wider at the tips with broad, thin, papery margins. The center of the bracts is dark brown. The bract tips overlap the base of nearby bracts. The flowers, which bloom from July to October, are rose to purple but rarely white. Brown knapweed reproduces from seeds.



Habitat: Brown knapweed prefers moist, cooler conditions than other knapweed species. It can be found growing in grasslands, open woods, meadows, pastures, woodland clearings, and in cutover areas of forest. Plants can tolerate partial shade.



Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in NC, OR, VA, and WA.

Ecological Impacts: Knapweeds are highly invasive weeds that are capable of forming large infestations under favorable conditions.

Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Pull or dig up small infestations including the entire root if possible. Plants that are periodically mowed will generally continue to flower and produce seed on shorter plants below the mower blade height. Provide a healthy cover crop to help prevent knapweed from reestablishing.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Biocontrol:** Gall flies; (*Urophora affinis* and *Urophora quadrifasciata*) feed on the developing seed heads and can dramatically reduce seed production. These insects co-exist well.

References: www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_info/brownknapweed.html, <http://plants.usda.gov>, <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/LANDS/Weeds/pdf/knapweed-control.pdf>, www.invasive.org/weeds/knapweed/chapter1.html