

NOXIOUS WEEDS

Status: Introduced

HOARY CRESS

(*Cardaria draba*)

Description

Hoary cress displays showy, white flowers in dense clusters giving the plant the common name, "white top." The short, fine, whitish hairs that cover the 1 to 2 foot (30.5 to 61 cm) tall plant give the species its official common name, hoary. The small 4-petaled flowers are borne in flat-topped clusters at the tips of branches. The blue-green leaves are oblong, 1/2 to 3 inches (1.3 to 7.6 cm) long and smooth. They are arranged alternately on the stem. Mature leaves have a very short to no *petiole*, with upper leaves clasping around the stem. Lower leaves do have *petioles*. The 1/16 inch (1.6 mm) oval, reddish-brown seeds are found in pairs within heart-shaped pods.

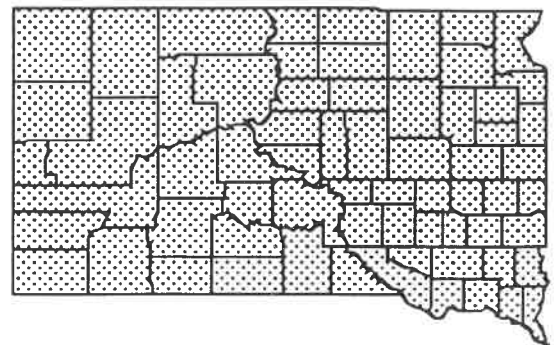


Distribution

This species is native to Eurasia. Because of its remarkable adaptability to different environmental conditions, including *alkaline soils*, it can be found all across the state, although infestations are small and scattered. It is most common in the western part of the state.

Natural History

Like other creeping *perennials*, its root system makes hoary cress difficult to eradicate. The dark-colored roots are slender and reach 10 to 15 feet (3.1 to 4.6 m) deep, although they may grow as deep as 30 feet (9.2 m). Root buds can develop into new shoots.



Hoary cress is the earliest growing *noxious weed* in South Dakota. It flowers in May and becomes dormant during mid-season. The plant's aggressive nature and

drought tolerance makes it a concern. Nearly all infested acreage is in pasture and rangeland. It is very seldom found in cropland. This species is most common on *alkaline*, disturbed soils and is highly competitive with other plants.

Management Considerations

Spring is best for controlling hoary cress because of the plant's mid-season dormancy. Hoary cress can be eradicated with a combination of cultivation, planting of competitive crops, and application of chemicals.

Glossary

Alkaline soil - a soil having so high a degree of alkalinity (pH 8.5 or higher) or so high a percentage of exchangeable sodium (15 % or more of the total exchangeable bases), or both, that plant growth is restricted.

Noxious weed - designation of the State Weed Control Board. These are weeds that are difficult to control once they are established.

Perennial - a plant that lives more than two years.

Petiole - a small stem that attaches a leaf to a branch.

References

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Klingman Glenn C., Weed Science, 1982. John Wiley & Sons Inc. NY.

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Selected Resources For Teachers

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South Dakota/Nebraska Weed Identification Guide, 1994. Black Hills RC&D Office, 515 9th Street, Rapid City, SD 57701-2663.

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