

Invasive Plant Species: **Blueweed**

(Echium vulgare)



Originally brought to BC as an ornamental plant from Southern Europe and West-Central Asia. Blueweed has escaped from garden beds and is now invading dry, rocky areas such as: roadsides, drainage ditches, right-of-ways, fence lines, pastures, rangeland and other disturbed areas. Seeds are distributed by sticking to animals, human clothing, hair and bird's feathers.



Identification

Blueweed consists of multiple blue, cone shaped flowers with 5 lobes which can be found on shorter stems near the top. Blueweed can grow to be 30-80cm tall, with hairy stems covered in darker spots and leaves that shrink in size approaching the top of the plant. The unique foliage makes this plant unlikely to be confused with other species.

Why is Blueweed a Problem?

Blueweed invades rangelands and pastures, replacing viable plants for grazing. This plant is toxic to cattle and horses therefore reducing the availability of land and food sources for these animals. As well as causing harm to animals who ingest blueweed. All can cause economic losses.

Other common names for this plant are Viper's bugloss, snake flower and blue devil.

Impacts

Other potential agricultural related losses due to blueweed are the plant's ability to contaminate crop seeds. Blueweed can also act as a host for viral diseases that may spread to other native plants. Currently, it is unknown if blueweed may outcompete native species outside of pasturelands.

Blueweed can also cause skin rashes to those who touch the hairy stems, so always wear gloves when handling this plant.



Controlling Blueweed on Your Property

Prevention is the best solution to eradicating blueweed. Removing seeds from clothing, pet's fur, personal equipment and vehicles. Also, maintaining crops to ensure competitive plant community.

DO

- Hand-pulling may be an effective control for small infestations; while cutting larger infestations will decrease seed production.
- Due to the ability to re-sprout, multiple treatments will likely be required to deplete root reserves to the point where flowering and seed production are improbable.
- Monitor treatment success over successive years.
- Minimize soil disturbance and quickly re-vegetate disturbed areas.
- Use glyphosate herbicides appropriate to site conditions, most effective in the fall. Follow instructions on label.

DON'T

- **Do not** move or reuse soils contaminated with blueweed. Seeds can stay viable up to 10 years in the soil.
- **Do not** compost blueweed, as it can still produce viable seeds.
- **Do not** use wildflower seed mixtures containing unspecified seeds.

**Blueweed can
produce up to 2800
seeds per plant!**

Proper Disposal

For safe disposal, place plant material in garbage bags labeled "invasive species," tied off using a gooseneck tie and zap strap and take to Bings Creek Solid Waste Management Facility (3900 Drinkwater Road, Duncan) or Peerless Road Drop-off Depot (10830 Peerless Road, Ladysmith).

**For more information on
invasive plant species visit**

www.northcowichan.ca/Plants
Invasive Species Council of BC (ISC)
<https://bcinvasives.ca/>
Reporting Invasive Species
www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

**Need help identifying potential
invasive species on your property?
Email us a picture!**

Contact us:

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