

Weed Post's One Year Anniversary: The Year in Review

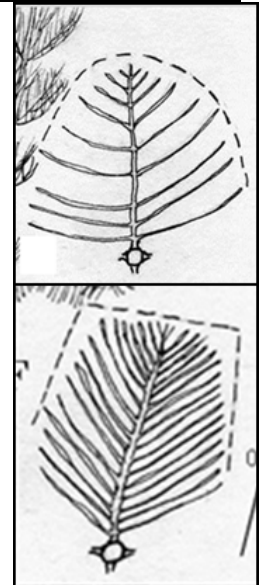
Identification: Proper identification of a species ensures control measures are applied to the right species. For example, the native shortspike watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum sibiricum*) is common throughout Montana, but resembles the exotic Eurasian watermilfoil (*M. spicatum*). Shortspike (above right) has less than 14 paired leaflets, whereas Eurasian (below right) has 14 or more. Mistaking shortspike for Eurasian could mean applying expensive control treatments to an innocuous native plant and increasing the risk of unnecessary collateral damage to the river, lake or other water body (see [January 2011: Eurasian Watermilfoil](#)).

Impacts: Knowing potential impacts may help to prioritize species for control when resources are limited and determine appropriate short and long-term management goals. For example, a homeowner with hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*) in the yard may find that irrigation and fertilization can improve the health of the existing lawn, allowing the lawn grasses to outcompete hoary alyssum. In contrast, forage producers with hoary alyssum in a pasture may want to use a more active approach to reduce populations as quickly as possible because it's toxic to horses (see [May 2011: Hoary alyssum](#)).

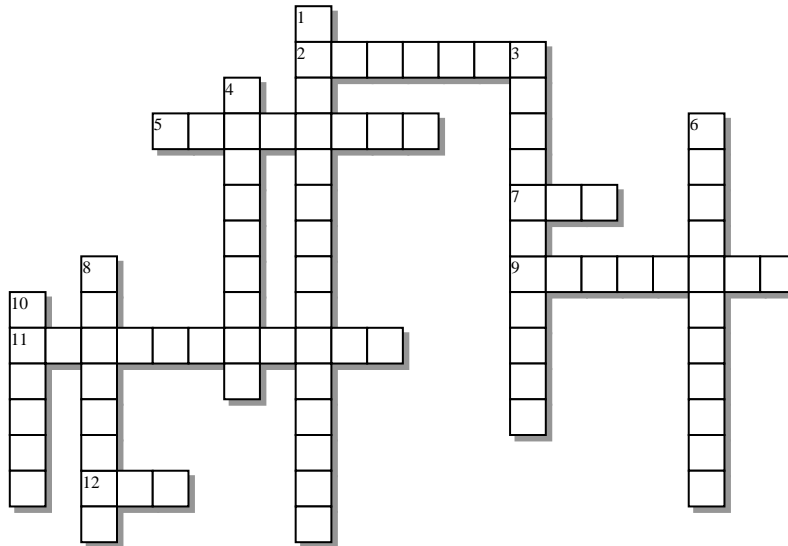
Habitat: Understanding the preferred habitat of a weed can help predict whether it will become invasive in a given area. It can also help direct monitoring efforts to areas where the plant is most likely to establish and thrive. Monitoring for new high priority species that have not yet established can seem like an overwhelming task, but focusing on habitat types where they are most likely to occur can save time and money. For example, monitoring efforts for Scotch broom would focus on areas with acidic, low fertility soils (see [April 2011: Scotch broom](#)).

Spread: Identifying how a weed spreads can help managers target control measures to limit reproductive potential. For example, spotted and diffuse knapweed spread by seed only so controlling these species prior to seed production is important. In contrast, Russian knapweed spreads by seeds and rhizomes, so control efforts must address both seed and vegetative reproduction (see [September 2011: Knapweed Identification](#)). Species in the knotweed complex rarely reproduce by seed, but spread aggressively by rhizomes. Long distance dispersal occurs when root fragments are inadvertently moved off-site. It is critical that soil from an area where knotweed grows is never transported off-site (see [February 2011: Knotweed complex](#)).

Management Priorities: Understanding the priority levels (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B or 3) of state-listed species facilitates state-wide efforts to reduce the spread and impact of weeds. Montana's only priority 1A species, yellow starthistle, has occurred in isolated patches, and to date has been found early enough to eradicate before it has spread. To avoid the fates of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and California where it is widespread, we must all be actively looking for this species and report it immediately if found (see [July 2011: Yellow starthistle](#)). In contrast, Canada thistle is a widely distributed Priority 2B weed; management is less focused on early detection and eradication, but focused instead on containment.



Weed Post Puzzle: Test your knowledge of 2011 Weed Posts



Across:

- 2 - Hoary alyssum has four white petals with _____ resembling rabbit ears.
- 5 - It is likely Eurasian watermilfoil and not a common native if there are more than _____ leaflet pairs per leaf.
- 7 - Western salsify is not state-listed but has been especially problematic on this type of land (three letter acronym), as the plumose, umbrella-like seeds can easily float over to adjacent cropland.
- 9 - This Priority 2A species has blue, funnel-shaped flowers, five brightly colored stamens, and short and long hairs that cover the stem and leaves.
- 11 - Roots of flowering rush are _____ and fragment easily, enabling long distance dispersal.
- 12 - Winged stem, bright yellow flowers and bracts up to ___ inch in length help identify yellow starthistle.

Down:

- 1 - If you're in England, you could be prosecuted for moving soil from an area with these plants off-site (two words). Root fragments as small as 0.02 lb can form new plants.
- 3 - Priority 1B species with yellow pea-flowers prefers mild winters and warm summers. It has spread aggressively in the Pacific NW, but not widely in Montana.
- 4 - Common name for the pondweed with undulating leaf margins resembling lasagna noodles and minute teeth visible with a hand lens.
- 6 - Don't snack on this vine with palmate leaves and fruits that resemble grapes. It's poisonous!
- 8 - The name for a group of species in the Brassicaceae family that spread rhizomatously and can be distinguished from each other by the shape of the seed pod.
- 10 - These structures on the knapweed receptacle are essential for differentiating among the many species.

Solutions are posted to the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:
<http://www.msuextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html>

