

Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

November 2017

Creeping knapweed

Creeping knapweed, *Rhaponticum repens*

Pretty, fast growing plants tolerant to pests and diseases sound like the perfect plants for your backyard. Unfortunately, many declared plants and other invasive weeds can be described this way but they pose a significant risk to Western Australia's (WA) agricultural industries if they become established.



Creeping knapweed flowers

In their native environment, knapweeds and thistles are wildflowers that provide attractive habitat and nectar sources for many native birds and insects. In Australia, however, they are invasive species that can have devastating impacts on agriculture.

Creeping knapweed, *Rhaponticum repens*, is a perfect example of how damaging exotic species can be. It is a deep-rooted perennial that can dramatically reduce the yield of crops by up to 75%.

It is particularly toxic to horses; causing a specific type of brain damage with accompanying nervous characteristics known as chewing disease.

Creeping knapweed has been found once in WA, near Ravensthorpe and could flourish if allowed to establish. The weed is difficult to control once established due to its deep root system.

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Creeping knapweed taking over farming property

Stop the introduction of weeds

Be on the lookout for any thistles or thistle-like plants that have purple, lilac or pink florets that form singly at the end of branches.

Due to the increase of online seed sales, it is important to stay vigilant and ensure that this and other weeds do not find their way into your garden.



Declared plants can get into WA in seed packets purchased online

Knapweed and thistle seeds may also be purchased as souvenirs when travelling in Europe, the UK or North America.

Don't purchase seeds or accept them as gifts unless you know they are permitted species and you've checked with Australian Quarantine. If importing seeds domestically, you can contact Quarantine WA on 93341800.

More information

Further information and advice can be found on our website: agric.wa.gov.au (search for Creeping knapweed). There is also an online weed identification course and teaching resources available. If you do not have internet access, please contact our Pest and Disease Information Service (08) 9368 3080.

Help prevent the entry and spread of weeds in WA

Pests can negatively impact your ability to grow home produce and the success of WA's horticulture and agriculture industries. To help with surveillance for new pests, please take photos, and send us a report via one of the options below:



Report unfamiliar plants

Use the **MyWeedWatcher** app or website: agric.wa.gov.au search 'myweedwatcher' or contact the Pest and Disease Information Service