Common Name: Russian knapweed, hardheads

Scientific Name: *Acroptilon repens* (L.) DC.
Family: Sunflower family (Asteraceae)

Similar Species: Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea biebersteinii* DC.), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*).

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Description: Plants to three feet tall. Stems erect, stiff, branched. Flower heads urn-shaped, composed of disc florets only. The new leaves and stems are covered with gray hairs (knap). Flowers pink-purple turning straw colored at maturity. Leaves alternate, lower stem leaves are lobed, upper leaves oblong and toothed becoming progressively smaller up the stem. Distinguished from other knapweeds by the **pointed papery tips (rounded or acute papery margins)** of the involucral bracts. Unlike Canada thistle for which it can be mistaken, Russian knapweed has no spines or prickles.

Life History: Perennial. Primary means of spreading is by adventitious buds on roots but also reproduces by seeds. Roots may reach 21 feet below the soil surface, growing up to 21 feet per year.

Where Found: Not yet reported in Alaska.

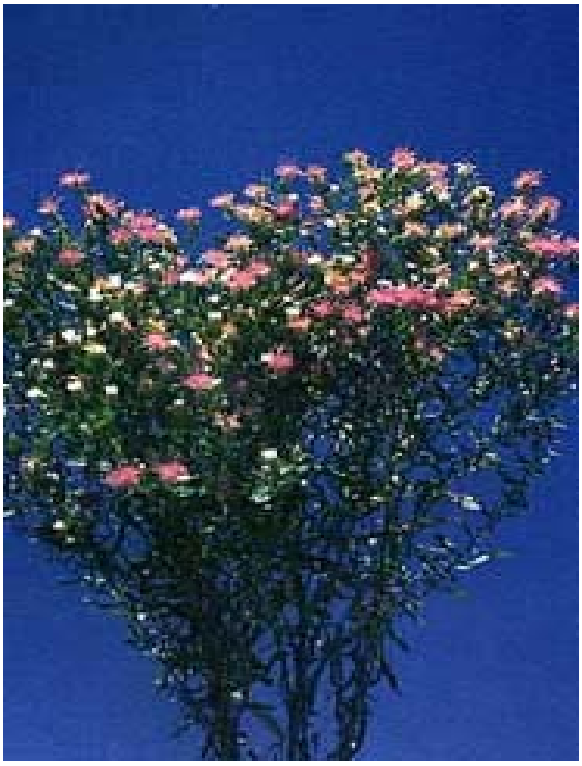
Habitat: Primarily disturbed areas including grazed land, cultivated fields, waste places, roadsides, riverbanks, and irrigation ditches, often forming dense stands or monocultures.

Impacts: Forms dense stands on disturbed ground. Capable of invading riparian forests. Produces allelopathic chemicals to out compete other plant species. Knapweed is poisonous to horses. Listed as a prohibited noxious weed in Alaska.

Fun Facts: Stands of knapweed have been reported to survive for 100 years. Knapweed originated in central Asia and was introduced as a contaminant of crop seed around 1898, probably in alfalfa seed from Turkestan. It is now found on all continents except Antarctica.

Control Options: The best management for Russian knapweed is to maintain healthy native plant communities. Knapweed is mainly invasive on disturbed sites.

Herbicide Options: 2,4-D, clopyralid and glyphosate are moderately effective. Use clopyralid cautiously as it is active in the soil and can be absorbed by the roots of desireable vegetation. Herbicides are most effective when applied prior to seed set. Count on a multi-year treatment program and have a revegetation plan in place. One recommended strategy would be planting a perennial grass and using 2,4-D, or clopyralid because these chemicals, unlike glyphosate, will not kill grass.



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