

VALLEY-WIDE WEED WATCH

Please be on the lookout for these weeds.



Blueweed or **viper's bugloss** (*Echium vulgare*) can be a biennial or short lived perennial. It has a significant root system ranging from 12 to 32 inches. Blueweed is fairly easy to identify, but could be mistaken for a native species. **Speedy ID:** ●basal rosette of long lance-shaped leaves ●leaves and stem are covered with long and short hairs ●stem has dark spots at the bases of the long hairs ●bright blue funnel-shaped flowers located at the top of a curled cyme cluster ●bright pink or red stamens, four long and one short extending beyond the petals. Blueweed is typically found in disturbed areas and over grazed range or pasture. It thrives in sandy, well-drained soils with low nutrient levels and tolerates dry conditions. It has also been found in irrigated, maintained pastures. **The plant is not considered palatable to livestock and has toxic alkaloids that can cause liver failure. Poisoning may be immediate or may take several weeks. Blueweed displaces native vegetation blueweed is also a**

known host for several plant diseases spread by aphids including alfalfa mosaic virus and tobacco mosaic virus. Early detection of new plants is very important. Small infestations can be managed by hand-pulling or digging, while larger infestations can be treated with herbicides. (MSU EP0195 March 2010; Photo credit: University of Georgia)



Common bugloss (*Anchusa officinalis*) is a deep rooted perennial that reproduces by seed. **Speedy ID:** ●plants produce several flowering stalks that grow 1-2 feet at maturity ●flower stem starts like a fiddleneck then straightens out ●Stems robust and hairy ●lower leaves lance shaped ●upper leaves either smooth or slightly toothed ●slightly pointed leaves are succulent and covered with stiff hairs ●flowers initially reddish, later turning to a deep blue to purple with white centers ●flowers originate at the ends of stalks. One plant can produce an average of 900 seeds which remain viable in the soil for several years. Common bugloss prefers dry, well-drained gravelly soils and poses a threat to many areas in Montana. Remaining pieces of root can resprout and produce new plants. **Common bugloss invades pastures and rangelands and is a concern to alfalfa production because leaves and stalks mold the hay once it is baled.** While not poisonous like blueweed it has been shown to reduce carrying

capacity in wild lands and pasture lands. (Spokane County Noxious Weed Control Board & Ravalli County, MT; Photo credit: Richard Old)



Rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*) is a perennial forb with a multi-branching wiry stems with few leaves giving a “skeletonized” appearance. Skeletonweed has a stout 3-7 foot deep taproot that produces lateral shoots. **Speedy ID:** ●plants have a dandelion-like basal rosette that withers and dies as the plant ages ●teeth of rosette leaves curve and point back toward the crown—leaves are hairless ●stems, leaves and roots contain milky latex sap. ●bright yellow flowers, less than one inch in diameter bloom early summer and continue into fall. ●petals toothed at tip ●downward pointing hairs cover lower 4-6” of stem; upper stem is smooth and hairless. Rush skeletonweed produces 15,000-20,000 ribbed seeds without pollination with viability from 6 months to 8 years. Rush skeletonweed prefers coarse-textured, well-drained soils on disturbed roadsides, river banks, dry river beds, rangeland, and wheat growing areas. **In wheat growing regions, has shown to reduce grain yields by 80%. The wiry stems clog harvesting equipment, increase breakdown and maintenance costs. This plant also reduces forage production in rangelands for cattle and native plants for wildlife. Also causes choking in cattle.** (Jane Mangold, MSU Monthly Weed Post, August 2012; MSU EB 132; Photos: Montana War on Weeds with inset Lewes Beach, University of California)



Dyer's woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) is a rapidly spreading tap-rooted biennial plant spreading mostly by seed. **Speedy ID:** ●height 1-4 feet ●rosette leaves, stalked, 1 ½-7” long, succulent, bluish-green, covered in fine hairs ●leaves on stalks lance-shaped and alternate on stem ●all leaves have notable white midrib (see photo) ●small yellow flowers 4 sepals and 4 petal ●fruit pod is flattened and 3/8” long and slightly pear shaped. Dyer's woad grows well in rocky soils with low water holding capacity in rangelands, pastures, and forest lands. **Following disturbance, Dyer's woad can increase rapidly to form dense infestations. It is typically avoided by livestock and wildlife meaning it increases with grazing and reduces available forage.** (Jane Mangold, MSU Monthly Weed Post, March 2013; USDA Ecology and Management of Dyer's Woad; July 2007); Photo: D. L. Nickrent, Southern Illinois University)



Tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*) is a biennial or short-lived perennial growing to 5.5 feet. **Speedy ID:** ●rosettes may attain a diameter of 1.5 feet ●rosette leaves are 2.7-8 inches long, deeply and pinnately lobed ●basal leaves may be without hair or wooly on the underside. ●stem leaves alternate and have an exaggerated pattern of leaf dissection ●bright yellow, showy flowers are sunflower-like in arrangement ●flower clusters form flat- or round-topped, dense and compact clusters. Tansy ragwort tolerates a wide range of habitats and environmental conditions. Typically found in pastures, forest clearings and waste places. **Tansy ragwort can reduce forage yields as much as 50% in pastures. Pyrrolizidine alkaloids are present in all plant parts. Cattle, deer, horses and goats may consume growing plants or silage. Cumulative storage of alkaloids in the liver can result in reduced weight gain, liver degradation, reduced butterfat in dairy cattle, and sudden death in apparently healthy animals. Tansy ragwort may also taint honey, making it bitter, off-color and unmarketable.** (Jim Jacobs, Ecology and Management of Tansy ragwort, June 2009; Photo: Wikimedia.org)

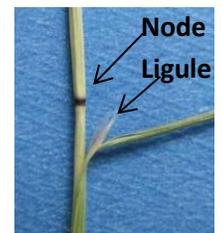


Medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) is a winter annual exotic grass. **Speedy ID:** ●slender bright green leaves ●stems are wiry and contain a few short, narrow leaves ●long awns emerge from seed head and point outward and upward ●awns have a twisted appearance making this plant identifiable as it dries out-seed heads (inflorescences) stay intact rather than breaking apart ●height can range from 6-24 inches ●medusahead has a yellow-green sheen that will be highly visible after cheat grass has turned brown. This grass tends to thrive in clayey soils and thrives in warm, dry summers and cool, moist weather from fall to spring. **Medusahead has a high silica content that gives it a rough and sharp texture and is slow to decompose, usually resulting in a layer of plant litter several inches thick.**

This grass is not palatable to livestock and wildlife. Seedheads contain stiff glumes and awns that can injure eyes and mouths of grazing animals. Medusahead germinates quickly and usurps water and nutrients from native perennial grasses. (Jane Mangold, Monthly Weed Post, January, 2014 and Montana IPM Bulletin, Spring 2014; Photo: Steve Dewey, University of Wyoming)



Ventenata, wiregrass, North Africa grass (*Ventenata dubia*) is a winter annual exotic grass. **Speedy ID:** ●reddish-black nodes in May-June ●unusually long, membranous ligule ●distinct shiny appearance and open panicle in June-July ●lower awns that are straight and upper awns that are twisted and bent when the plant dries. Ventenata has been found along roadsides and in hay, pasture, range lands. It is most common on south-facing hillsides with shallow, rocky, clay or clay-loam soils. This grass spreads quickly and is difficult to control. Ventenata will displace other grasses including invasives cheat grass and medusahead. **Ventenata will quickly begin replacing other grasses and reduce the ability of range and pasture to support cattle and wildlife.** (Jane Mangold, Monthly Weed Post, August, 2013; Photo: (Left) Steve Matson, USDA NRCS (Upper right) Pamela Scheinost, USDA-NRCS (Lower right) Matt Lavin, MSU)



Contact Information to report sightings:

CSKT Lands Department 675-2700, Ext 1240
 Lake County Weed Control 883-7330
 Sanders County Weed Department 826-3487
 Missoula County Weed Control 258-4200
 MSU Extension, Flathead Reservation 675-2700, Ext 7375
 MSU Extension, Lake County 676-4271

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