

A New Weed to Watch Out For – Mountain Bluet

By Christine Friedrichsmeier

Mountain Bluet (*Centaurea montana*), also known as Perennial Cornflower or Perennial Bachelor's Buttons, is a highly invasive garden escapee in the same family as knapweeds. On the Northwest Invasive Plant Council's Top Twelve Most Unwanted List, Mountain Bluet is still sold in garden centres, nurseries and seed catalogues, and is starting to become a serious problem in our area.

Mountain Bluet is a tap-rooted perennial herb from Europe. Gardening information states, "Once established, it doesn't require much care. It can grow easily in any soil, and doesn't require fertilization." It prefers full sun, but can grow in partial shade, and prefers drier sites, but can grow in all but the wettest sites. The copious quantity of seed produced also lives a long time in the soil. These qualities make it a very high risk invasive.

Mountain Bluet grows up to 80 cm (30 inches) tall and has simple, lance-shaped leaves that have a lightly woolly underside. The whole plant is lightly hairy. The flowers are similar to knapweeds, with the narrow disk flowers ("petals") coloured indigo blue and, rarely, white. Flowers bloom from late spring to early summer.

If you have this plant in your garden, or you find it in ditches or elsewhere, dig or pull it up, getting as much of the root system as possible to avoid re-sprouting. If you are unable to dig it up, then at least remove stems and flowerheads before the seeds have set. Bag it and remove it from the site to prevent the production of viable seed. The site will need to be re-treated for several years before the seed bank is used up and there are no more plants.

If you think you may have Mountain Bluet or any other invasive weed, please contact the Northwest Invasive Plant Council (NWIPC) at 1-866-44WEEDS. The NWIPC also has a printable information sheet at http://www.nwipc.org/invasive_plants.php?id=22.

