

# Blueweed *Echium vulgare*

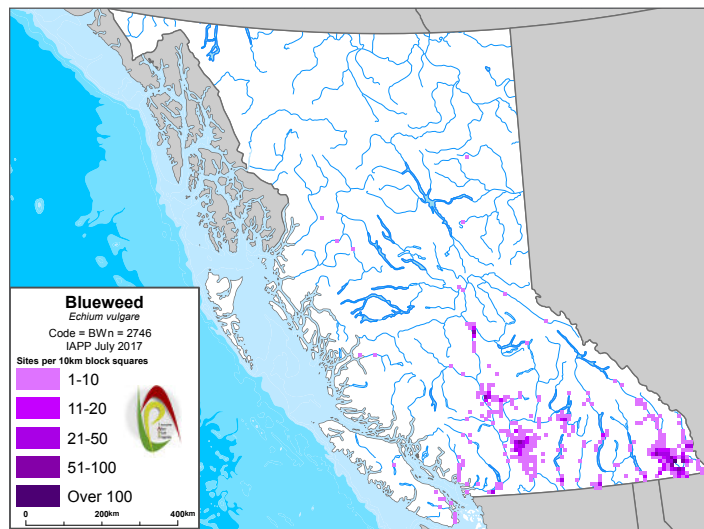
## About Blueweed

Blueweed is native to Southern Europe and West-Central Asia. It escaped from cultivation in North America as an ornamental and is now widely distributed throughout. Also commonly called

Viper's bugloss, 'bugloss' is Greek for ox-tongue, which describes the shape and roughness of the leaves.

## Legal Status

Invasive Plants Regulation, Forest and Range Practices Act; Noxious Weed (Regional), Weed Control Act.



## Distribution

Blueweed is common in central and south central areas of BC. It is a noxious weed in the Cariboo, Central Kootenay, Columbia-Shuswap, East Kootenay, Okanagan-Silimilkameem, and Thompson-Nicola Regional Districts.

## Identification

**Flowers:** Bright blue; 5-lobed; found on upper side of short stems.

**Stems:** Hairy, hairs painful to touch; mostly short hairs but some longer hairs are present which have dark, swollen bases producing noticeable flecks; at flowering, 30-80 cm tall.

**Leaves:** Covered in short hairs; become smaller approaching top of plant.

**Fruits:** Seeds (called nutlets) appear in groups of 4 along the stems; each nutlet is approximately 3 mm long, grayish-brown, rough and wrinkled.

**Similar Species:** Due to its bright blue flowers and hairy foliage, blueweed is not likely to be confused with other plants.



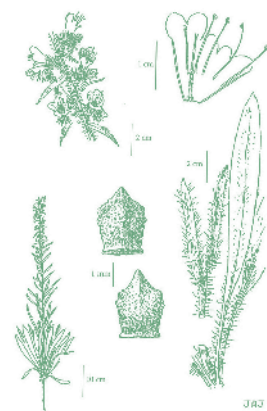
B. Stewart

## Ecological Characteristics

**Habitat:** Invades roadsides, drainage ditches, right-of-ways, fence lines, pastures, rangeland, and other disturbed areas.

**Reproduction:** Biennial or short-lived perennial species that reproduces by seed; up to 2800 seeds per plant.

**Dispersal:** Seeds are generally dropped in the immediate vicinity of the parent plant; however, they can be further distributed by animals as the rough seeds stick to clothing, hair and feathers.



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## Impacts

**Economic:** Invades pastures and rangelands, replacing forage plants; thus, infestations are associated with some economic losses.

**Ecological:** Blueweed's ability to compete with native plants in BC is unknown.

## Integrated Pest Management

*IPM is a decision-making process that includes identification and inventory of invasive plant populations, assessment of the risks that they pose, development of well-informed control options that may include a number of methods, site treatments, and monitoring.*

### Prevention

- » Remove plant seeds from personal gear, equipment, vehicles and machinery at designated cleaning stations before leaving infested sites.
- » Minimize soil disturbance and promptly re-vegetate disturbed areas.

### Mechanical Control

- » Hand-pulling may be an effective control for small infestations; while cutting larger infestations will decrease seed production.
- » Due to the ability to re-sprout, multiple treatments will likely be required to deplete root reserves to the point where flowering and seed production are improbable.
- » Monitor treatment success over successive years.

### Biocontrol

- » Currently no biocontrol agents are available for blueweed.

### Chemical Control

Herbicide recommendations and use must consider site characteristics and be prescribed based on site goals and objectives. Herbicide labels and other sources of information must be reviewed before selecting and applying herbicides.

- » 2,4-D can be applied in spring or early autumn for short-term control. Fall treatment is more effective than spring treatment.
- » Glyphosate can be used for short-term control in non-vegetated areas. Glyphosate is not recommended for use in areas where desirable perennial vegetation occurs.
- » Metalfuron methyl plus aminopyralid or these two herbicides plus 2,4-D provides very good control.
- » Picloram, alone or mixed with 2,4-D, provides long term, residual control.
- » Recent herbicide trials have shown that the addition of surfactants improves herbicide effectiveness, and that fall treatment is more effective than spring treatment.

- » Clopyralid is effective at high rates and is recommended for use under or near conifers.
- » Monitor treatment success over successive years.
- » Application of pesticides on Crown land must be carried out following a confirmed Pest Management Plan (Integrated Pest Management Act) and under the supervision of a certified pesticide applicator. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/pesticides-pest-management>



Ministry of Agriculture

## References/Links

- » A Citizen's Guide to Noxious Weeds (King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division). <https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/weeds/Brochures/Citizens-Guide-LoRes.pdf>
- » A Guide to Weeds in British Columbia. Blueweed. <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/plants/weedsbc/blueweed.pdf>
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- » BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, Invasive Alien Plant Program (IAPP). [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/Plants/application.htm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/Plants/application.htm)
- » E-Flora BC, an Electronic Atlas of the Plants of BC. [www.eflora.bc.ca/](http://www.eflora.bc.ca/)

