

Invasive Plants of BC

The regions of BC can be divided into three general areas:

1. Northern (excluding the coast)
2. Coastal (includes the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and the North Coast)
3. Interior (includes Cariboo/Thompson and Kootenay/Okanagan)

Here are some invasive plants that you might find in these regions.

Species	Northern	Coastal	Interior
Common tansy (<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>)	X	X	X
Dalmatian toadflax (<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>)	X		X
Knapweeds (<i>Centaurea</i> spp.)	X	X	X
Field scabious (<i>Knautia arvensis</i>)	X		X
Burdock (<i>Arctium</i> spp.)	X		X
Hawkweeds (<i>Hieracium</i> spp.)	X	X	X
Cheatgrass (<i>Bromus tectorum</i>)	X	X	X
Scotch broom (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>)		X	
Baby's breath (<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>)		X	X
Scentless chamomile (<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>)	X		X
Sulphur cinquefoil (<i>Potentilla recta</i>)		X	X
Gorse (<i>Ulex europaeus</i>)		X	
Giant hogweed (<i>Heracleum mantegassianum</i>)		X	
Knotweed (<i>Fallopia</i> , <i>Polygonum</i> spp.)	X	X	X

Species	Northern	Coastal	Interior
Daphne/Spurge laurel (<i>Daphne laureola</i>)		X	
English ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)		X	
Yellow archangel (<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>)		X	X
Thistles (<i>Cirsium</i> spp.)	X	X	X
Blueweed (<i>Echium vulgare</i>)		X	X
St. John's Wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)		X	X
Himalayan blackberry (<i>Rubus armeniacus</i>)		X	X
Purple loosestrife (<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>)		X	X
English holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)		X	
Oxeye daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>)	X	X	X
Rush skeletonweed (<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>)			X
Common bugloss (<i>Anchusa officinalis</i>)			X
Puncturevine (<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>)			X
Longspine sandbur (<i>Cenchrus longispinus</i>)			X
Yellow flag iris (<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>)		X	X
Tansy ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)		X	X

The following Invasive Species ID Cards indicate where the plants are found within BC, with designations of N (Northern Area), C (Coastal Area), and/or I (Interior Area), as well as how to identify and remove them.

Coloured outlines indicate if the plant is safe for youth to remove during an invasive weed pull. **Green** indicates that there are no concerns with removing the plant, **yellow** indicates that some precautions must be taken, and **red** indicates that youth should not attempt to remove this type of plant.

Please note! Invasive plant materials should not be composted, as their seeds and plant materials can survive most compost temperatures. Please bag all weeds and dispose of them as per your municipality's guidelines.

These cards are meant only to give an overview of invasive species in British Columbia. For in depth information, visit bcinvasives.ca.

NCI

Common tansy

Tanacetum vulgare



R. Mueller

FACTS

- Yellow disc flowers that resemble buttons and fern-like leaves
- Spreads mainly through seeds and roots
- Seeds can remain viable for up to 25 years
- May be toxic to livestock

REMOVAL

- Mow very close to the ground before July and subsequent herbicide treatment
- When hand-pulling, wear gloves and protective clothing to prevent skin irritation

NI

Dalmatian toadflax

Linaria dalmatica



M. Blackmore



L. Scott

FACTS

- Yellow snapdragon-like flowers and pale green heart-shaped leaves
- Milky juice appears when stems or leaves break
- Mature plants produce up to 50,000 seeds annually
- Toxic to animals

REMOVAL

- Remove before seeds develop
- Dig up as much root out as possible
- Bag and dispose cut flower heads- do not put in compost

NCI

Knapweeds

Centaurea spp.



R. Mueller



M. Blackmore

FACTS

- Diffuse: white flowers; Spotted: purple flowers
- Reproduce solely by seed; seeds remain viable for over 8 years (maybe up to 15 years)
- Flower in late spring, produce seeds in summer

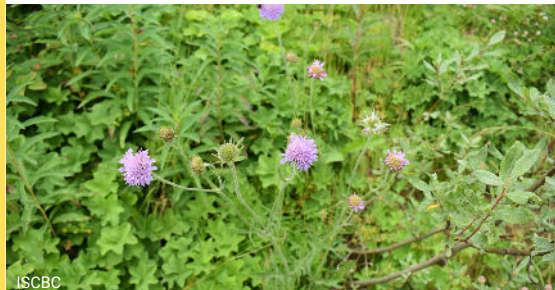
REMOVAL

- Pull, cut, or mow before seeds set
- Twist, bend, or crimp stems after removal
- If flowers present, bag and remove plants from site
- When possible, remove roots

NI

Field scabious

Knautia arvensis



ISCBC

FACTS

- Escaped ornamental known for attracting butterflies
- Long leafless stalks, violet or pink clover-like flowers
- Stems are hairy

REMOVAL

- Cut or mow before seeds set
- Pulling is seldom effective due to long, branched roots

NCI

Burdock

Arctium spp.



M. Blackmore

FACTS

- Large, heart-shaped leaves
- From 0.5-3m tall
- Purple flowers mature into brown, round burs that stick to clothing and fur
- Bats and birds can get caught in the burs

REMOVAL

- Cut the stem as close to the ground as possible, or below, before seeds develop
- Dig up the entire taproot
- Bag all plant material
- Pick up any burs from the ground

NI

Leafy spurge

Euphorbia esula



R. Mueller

L. Scott

FACTS

- Small yellowish-green flowers with distinctive heart-shaped leaves just below the flowers
- Narrow leaves spiral around the stem
- Produces a compound that inhibits growth of nearby plants
- Contains white, milky liquid that irritates skin

REMOVAL

- Gloves must be worn to protect skin from the toxic sap
- Do not attempt removal with youth

NI

Hoary alyssum

Berteroa incana



M. Blackmore, ISCBC

M. Blackmore, ISCBC

FACTS

- Small white flowers on slender stalks
- Plant is covered in star-shaped hairs that are rough to touch, with grey leaves close to the stem
- Toxic to horses

REMOVAL

- Small populations can be hand-pulled before seeds set
- Remove root crown
- Seed area with appropriate seed mixture to establish competition

NCI

Hawkweeds

Hieracium spp.



J. Leekie

L. Wilson

FACTS

- 12 introduced hawkweed species in B.C.
- Yellow, white, or orange ray flowers, in clusters
- Short, stiff hairs on the stems
- Native yellow species have leaves up their stems

REMOVAL

- Dig out leaves and shallow roots
- Do not spread any parts as regrowth will occur

NCI

Cheatgrass

Bromus tectorum



Tom Huetten, USDA Forest Service

FACTS

- 10-75 cm tall, with slightly hairy green stems and drooping branches
- Light green, hairy leaves
- 2-8 florets
- Sharp grass flower parts (awns) can injure wildlife and livestock's eyes and mouths
- Can be a serious wildfire hazard

REMOVAL

- Repeated mowing every 3 weeks during spring and summer
- Small infestations can be removed by hand

C

Scotch broom

Cytisus scoparius



J. Leekie

FACTS

- Bright yellow pea-like flowers
- Shrub, 1-3m tall
- Oval, alternate leaves. Older leaves have 3 leaflets
- Woody, yellow-brown stems when mature

REMOVAL

- Young plants can be hand-pulled when the stem is 1.5cm in diameter or smaller
- Soil disturbance can cause seeds in the soil to germinate. Pull during wet months to minimize disturbance
- Cut large plants when in bloom at or slightly below ground level

CI

Baby's breath

Gypsophila paniculata



J. Hallworth

FACTS

- Perennial plant that thrives in grasslands, fields, outcompetes native grasses, and infests hay crops
- Plants produce 10,000 seeds, spreads by rolling like tumbleweed
- Used in floral industry; seeds can still develop and spread from cut flowers

REMOVAL

- Hand-pull plants, removing most of the root
- Bag all seeds and plant materials

NI

Scentless chamomile

Tripleurospermum inodorum



R. Mueller

FACTS

- Daisy-like flower about 5cm in diameter
- Flowers are white with a yellow center
- No scent when crushed
- Mature plants tend to be bushy
- Fern-like leaves, also no scent when crushed

REMOVAL

- Cut or mow before flowers form
- Hand-pull small infestations before seeds set
- Use caution when removing near waterways to prevent dispersal downstream

CI**Sulphur cinquefoil***Potentilla recta*

L. Scott

L. Scott

FACTS

- Pale yellow flowers with five heart-shaped petals
- 5 to 7 hairy, serrated leaflets and hairy stems
- Decreases available forage for wildlife and livestock

REMOVAL

- Hand-pull or dig up small infestations
- Remove before seeds have matured. If seeds are present, cut and bag seed heads before removing the plants

C**Gorse***Ulex europaeus*

B. Brown

Bergman

FACTS

- Perennial, evergreen shrub, thrives in sandy, sunny clearings, roadsides, fields
- Yellow flowers and black seed pods; looks like broom but has sharp pointy spines on the stem

REMOVAL

- Leaves and stems are very spiny- use leather gloves and eye protection when removing
- Small plants and infestations can be dug up- ensure to remove all roots
- Cutting larger plants when in flower will prevent seed set

C**Giant hogweed***Heracleum mantegazzianum*

IPCMV

FACTS

- Plants grow up to 5m in height
- Numerous small white flowers clustered in a large umbrella-shaped head, up to 80cm in diameter
- Dark green, coarse-toothed leaves, in 3 segments

REMOVAL

- Contains a highly toxic sap that can cause burns, blisters and scarring
- Do not attempt removal with youth

NCI**Knotweed***Fallopia, Polygonum spp.*

Tom Huette, Bugwood.org

J. Hallworth

FACTS

- Small white/green flowers in plume-like, branched clusters along the stem
- Grow in large, dense thickets
- Heart to triangular shaped leaves
- One of the most aggressive invasive plants

REMOVAL

- Cut close to the ground regularly. Do not cut plants near water as they could spread downstream
- Can regenerate from very small root and stem fragments
- Bag all plant parts before removing from site; check with municipality about disposal

C**Daphne/spurge laurel***Daphne laureola*

D. Hanna

FACTS

- Glossy, oblong evergreen leaves
- Yellow fluted flowers
- Small green to black berries
- Found in Douglas fir forests
- Limits growth of native plants, changes soil chemistry

REMOVAL

- All parts of the plant have toxic compounds
- Do not attempt removal with youth

C**English ivy***Hedera helix*

J. Leekie

FACTS

- Evergreen vine that can climb 30m
- Has thick, waxy dark-green leaves
- Dense groundcover that can shade out native plants
- Can damage buildings and trees that it grows on

REMOVAL

- Wear gloves and long sleeves to prevent skin irritation
- Pull by hand
- Cut main stem at chest height and remove to the ground
- Do not pull from high sections of trees

CI**Yellow archangel***Lamiastrum galeobdolon*

J. Leekie

FACTS

- Flowers are yellow and are in whorls around the stem
- Variegated leaves are silver-white with green edges, and serrated
- Stems are square and covered in fine hairs

REMOVAL

- Hand-pulling is recommended
- All parts can produce a new plant, so ensure all parts are removed, bagged, and disposed of
- Do not compost

NCI**Thistles***Cirsium spp.*

M. Blackmore

Sciadopitys, Flickr

FACTS

- Canada: white to purple flowers in clusters up to five, smooth spineless stem
- Bull: Purple, spiny flowers, spiny stems
- Leaves have spiny edges
- Reproduce with seeds and creeping roots

REMOVAL

- Cut when at the budding stage; repeat regularly
- Hand-pull small plants and infestations- try to remove all of the roots
- Wear protective gloves and clothing to protect from sharp spines
- Bag all plant parts and remove to a landfill

CI

Blueweed *Echium vulgare*



B. Stewart

B. Stewart

FACTS

- Bright-blue, 5-lobed flowers
- Hairy stems, painful to touch
- Leaves covered in short hairs
- Rough seeds stick to clothing, hair, and feathers
- Toxic to livestock

REMOVAL

- Wear thick gloves to hand-pull small infestations
- Cut or mow large infestations

CI

St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*



Justin DeMerchant, iNaturalist

J. Leekie

FACTS

- Bright yellow flowers with 5 separate petals
- Numerous flowers in clusters
- Oval-shaped leaves covered with transparent dots
- Can cause skin burns to livestock

REMOVAL

- Contains a toxin that can cause photosensitivity; wear long sleeves and gloves for protection
- Hand pulling before the flowers go to seed can reduce the spread; remove as much of the root system as possible

CI

Himalayan blackberry *Rubus armeniacus*



L. Scott

FACTS

- Small white to pinkish, 5-petaled flowers, arranged in clusters
- Stiff stems (canes) with prickles
- Evergreen, large, rounded or oblong leaves
- Black, shiny, hairless fruit

REMOVAL

- Wear thick gloves, long clothing, and eye protection to protect from sharp spines
- Cut back canes to find access to the ground and dig up the roots as much as possible
- Bag all cut plant parts and dispose of in a landfill

CI

Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*



R. Mueller

FACTS

- Showy purple flowers with 5-7 petals arranged vertically
- Leaves grow opposite one another on the stem
- Wetland plant, loves water, even standing water

REMOVAL

- Small infestations should be hand-pulled
- Pull before seeds set
- Remove the entire root to avoid regrowth
- Put in sealable plastic bag
- Transport to landfill; do not compost

C**English holly***Ilex aquifolium*

D. Polster

FACTS

- Trees up to 7-10m tall
- Dark green, shiny, spiny leaves
- Red, toxic berries
- Crowds out native plants

REMOVAL

- Hand-pull sprouts and small saplings
- Wear protective clothing to protect from spiny leaves
- Cut larger plants at the base and, if possible, remove the roots
- Monitor for regrowth
- Younger children can remove berries from the ground

NCI**Oxeye daisy***Leucanthemum vulgare*

L. Scott



S. Atherton

FACTS

- Daisy-like flowers about 5cm in diameter
- White petals with yellow centers
- Single to a few erect stems, sometimes branched
- Seeds remain healthy up to five years
- Crowds out native plants

REMOVAL

- Pull or dig up plants
- Ensure all roots are removed
- Follow-up as needed as seeds can remain viable in the soil for many years
- Do not compost; dispose of in landfill

I**Rush skeletonweed***Chondrilla juncea*

Steve Dewey, Bugwood.org



R. Mueller

FACTS

- Flowers are produced along or at the ends of stems
- Bright yellow flowers
- Leaves are sharply toothed and wither as the plant develops
- Lower stems have short hairs; upper stems are smooth

REMOVAL

- Hand-pull small infestations
- Cutting and mowing is ineffective

I**Common bugloss***Anchusa officinalis*

R. Mueller



R. Mueller

FACTS

- Found in fields, pastures, roadsides; reduces yield and spoils alfalfa hay
- Fleshy, hairy leaves; deep blue flowers produce 4 nut-like seeds
- Each plant can produce 900 seeds that spread when eaten by animals or are blown in the wind

REMOVAL

- Mature plants have a long taproot; dig out all plant parts carefully with a shovel

Puncturevine

Tribulus terrestris



L. Scott



L. Scott

FACTS

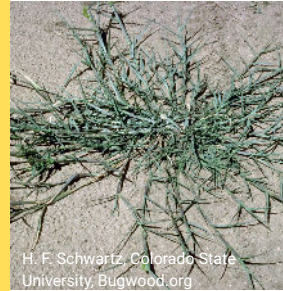
- Annual plant, spreads along the ground, forms dense mats
- Yellow flowers, many small leaflets; fruit forms tough curved spines

REMOVAL

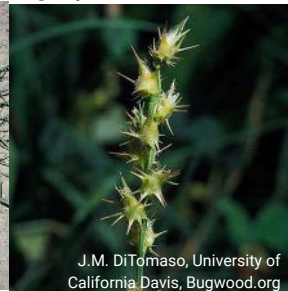
- Danger: spines can easily penetrate skin, leather, and flatten rubber tires
- Do not attempt removal with youth

Longspine sandbur

Cenchrus longispinus



H. F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



J.M. DiTomaso, University of California Davis, Bugwood.org

FACTS

- Also known as burgrass: invasive annual grass usually spreads along the ground
- Light green, flattened leaves, seeds round and spikey; hooks onto clothing and animal fur
- Found in sandy, dry soils, along roadsides

REMOVAL

- Dig up plants with hoe or pull by hand; make sure all seeds are bagged and disposed of
- Clean clothes, equipment, and pets after leaving area to ensure you don't spread it to new areas

Yellow flag iris

Iris pseudacorus



J. Craig



K. Maitland

FACTS

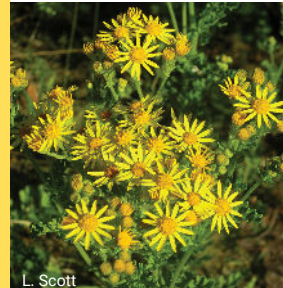
- Creates dense stand in wetlands, and threatens native plants and animals
- Showy yellow flowers with 3 sepals that curve backwards and 3 petals that point upward

REMOVAL

- Can be pulled or cut, but must be repeated annually
- Wear gloves and protective clothing as resins can cause irritation
- floating seeds/fragmentation

Tansy ragwort

Senecio jacobaea



L. Scott



L. Scott

FACTS

- Poisonous bushy plant, many deeply-cut leaves, bright yellow daisy-like flowers
- Grows in pastures, hayfields, meadows, roadsides and clear cuts
- Contains alkaloids that can poison livestock
- One plant produces 150,000 seeds

REMOVAL

- Dig out entire plant and root sprouts; hand pull if plants are small and soil moist
- Bag all seeds and plant parts
- Wear gloves and protective clothing, as it can cause skin irritation
- Poisonous if ingested