

# Knapweeds (*Centaurea* genus)

## SUMMARY

Knapweeds are **herbaceous biennials or perennials**. Seedlings emerge throughout the growing season and **rosettes persist year-round**. Knapweeds **bloom in summer** with **white to purple flowers**. As part of the aster family, knapweeds have composite flowers with each flowerhead made up of many tiny florets. Knapweeds also have **bracts at the base of their flowerheads**. Characteristics of the bracts are key for distinguishing knapweed species. Seeds **are dry, brown, and elliptic** in shape with **tufts of hair** to aid wind dispersal.

## LOOK ALIKES

- Canada thistle's (*Cirsium arvense*) **flower quantity, size, and shape** can be similar to knapweeds. Canada thistle **leaves are noticeably spiny**.



Scientific Name	Common Name	NR 40
<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	Diffuse knapweed	P
<i>Centaurea jacea</i>	Brown knapweed	R
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed	R
<i>Centaurea nigrescens</i>	Tyrol knapweed	R
<i>Centaurea repens</i>	Russian knapweed	P
<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>	Spotted knapweed	R
<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	Yellow star thistle	P

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Scientific Name	Common Name	Leaves	Flowers	Bracts	Seeds
<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	Diffuse knapweed	Alternate, finely divided, tiny hairs give grey appearance	Usually white, sometimes pinkish to purple; July – Sept.	Multiple lateral spines + one prominent spine on tip (1/3" long)	Urn-shaped seed heads; seeds with no tufts
<i>Centaurea jacea</i>	Brown knapweed	Lance-shaped, undivided; leaves smaller at top	Rose to lavender to purple, 1 - 1 ½"; June – Oct.	Rounded, wide, + brown at tip; often appear raggedly torn	Tan-colored seeds with fine hairs, no tufts
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed	Lance-shaped, narrow end at base, widest at middle; leaves smaller at top; edges smooth to lightly serrated	White to purple; June – Oct.	Black	Tan, hairy seed ~1/10" long; may have small dark bristle at one end
<i>Centaurea nigrescens</i>	Tyrol knapweed	Basal leaves lance-shaped, narrow end at base, widest at middle; upper leaves lance-shaped, smaller at top	Lavender to purple, 1 – 1 ½"; July- Aug.	Green to pinkish with parallel veins; triangular brown to blackish tips with fringes on each side	Dry brown seed, finely hairy, may have tufts
<i>Centaurea repens</i>	Russian knapweed	Grayish-white, deeply lobed near base; entire or serrate leaves in upper plant	Pink to purple, ½"; July – Sept.	Green at base, slightly hairy at tip, no fringes or spines	Ivory-colored seeds with tufts
<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>	Spotted knapweed	Grey-green to blue-green, somewhat hairy, deeply lobed into narrow segments	Pink to purple, 1"; June – Oct.	Green to purplish-brown with parallel veins; brown to black tip with fringes	Brown, finely hairy, tuft or short light brown to white hairs
<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	Yellow star thistle	Grey-green, covered in woolly hairs, often lobed on lower half of leaf	Yellow, ½-3/4"; July – Oct.	Light green, covered in cobwebby hairs, multiple spreading spines at tip with one pointed yellowish spine ~1" long	Dry seed; center seeds with tufts of white hairs, perimeter seeds without tufts