

Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

Description

Perennial that grows to heights of 20 – 80 cm. Black knapweed is a dull green plant entirely covered with small, rough hairs. Upright stems are branched at the top, with narrow upper leaves and larger, lobed leaves below. Basal rosette leaves are broad, stalked, and shallowly lobed. Stem leaves are smaller and not lobed. Rose to purple thistle-like flowers at the end of stems, florets being all tubular. Floral bracts have long, black fringes from a dark triangular centre which give the appearance of a black seed head.

Key Identifiers

- ✓ Upper leaves narrow and generally with entire margins, but the lower ones lobed, or with some coarse teeth
- ✓ Whole plant is dull green, rather rough with small hair
- ✓ Woody crown root
- ✓ Dark brown – black bracts; comb-like fringe on margin
- ✓ Stem is swollen below the flowerhead
- ✓ Well visited by nectar insects

Location in Canada

BC, NB, Nfld, NS, Ontario, PEI and Quebec are all known to have this knapweed. Alberta does not have any known reports of black knapweed.

Resources

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/cepublishations/pnw0432/pnw0432.pdf>

Similar species

(*Centaurea* spp.) Other knapweeds are going to be similar to black knapweed. The key feature for differentiating all knapweeds from one another is to compare the unique bracts. The link under “Resources” is an excellent resource to walk you through identifying knapweeds.

May be mistaken for a thistle at a passing glance but upon inspection, all parts of black knapweed lack spines.



Cindy Roche, Bugwood.org



UGA1350054