

Whitetop (hoary cress)

Plants emerge in early spring, will bloom and set seed by late June. District crews kick off the spraying season with the Whitetop program in late May.



Whitetop (Hoary cress) is a perennial that grows up to 3 feet tall. Leaves are grayish-green, clasping, lightly pubescent, up to 4 inches long, and are shaped like arrowheads. Flowers are white with 4 petals, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch across, and borne in April and May; these dense flower clusters give the weed a flat-topped appearance early in the season, but this is lost as the stem elongates. Two small, flat, reddish-brown seeds are contained in each of the heart-shaped seed pods.



It is a colony-forming perennial from deep underground and extensive horizontal roots. Stems are 1-4 ft. tall, ridged, branching above. Leaves are alternate, lacking petioles, oblong or lance-shaped, divided into spiny tipped irregular lobes.



Grazing management of perennial grasses can inhibit the establishment of this weed; however, overgrazing is a major cause of weed invasion. Where applicable, one season of intensive tillage from spring until freeze-up can eliminate over 90% of hoary cress (whitetop). Mowing would weaken the plant, but not kill it. There are no bio-agents available for release on whitetop at this time, but research is ongoing and there is potential of a release on the horizon.



Herbicides are effective in suppressing or controlling new infestations of hoary cress. However, on large, well established infestations, control is a long term commitment. Consult the District for specific recommendations that will best suit your needs.

