

# Hoary Alyssum

*Berteroa incana*



**Plant Family:** Mustard (Brassicaceae)

**Other Names:** Hoary false madwort, hoary false alyssum

**Similar Species:**

**Weed Classification:** Priority 2A

**Native to:** Europe and Asia

**Is This Weed Toxic?** Yes, horses have been poisoned and in some cases killed due to ingestion of this plant.

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## Identification

Hoary Alyssum is a 7 – 30 inch tall erect plant with small white/gray flowers that develop into round seed pods that remain attached to the stem until the end of the growing season. Although a fairly simple-looking flower, it is easily recognizable by its deeply notched petals. This weed decreases forage value in pastures and hay fields, and if 30% or more of forage is contaminated with hoary alyssum it can cause a gamut of ailments in horses ranging from laminitis and diarrhea to death. Numerous horse deaths have been reported across the Midwest and Northwest in the past several years. Although it is not as common in Flathead County as other noxious weeds it is well worth the time to prevent new infestations and control established ones.

## Treatment

Shallow tilling that severs the tap root below the root crown will kill this weed, although tilling will generally be more effective if followed by an herbicide application due to likely regeneration from the seed bank. Tilling is only recommended in cropland or when the areas will be seeded with desired competitive perennial plants.

Alyssum thrives in dry temperatures; irrigation can be utilized to improve the growing conditions of desirable forbs and help reduce the infestation through plant competition. Fertilization and proper nutrient management can be utilized with similar results to irrigation.

Hand-pulling can temporarily reduce small-scale infestations and newly invading plants. Save this treatment method for when the ground is moist and use a shovel or hand trowel to remove the taproot. Bag any plants with seed pods to prevent further seeding.

Mowing alone is not an acceptable means of control. Combine regular mowing with irrigation and nutrient management to reduce seed production as well as increase health of desirable plants. **CLEAN EQUIPMENT AFTER MOWING.**

Grazing is generally not utilized for hoary alyssum control as studies have shown poor results with a variety of animals.

Herbicide application should take place in spring when the plants are actively growing, prior to bolt. Repeat applications will be needed since this plant germinates and regenerates multiple times throughout the growing season.

Schultz, Susan. "POISONOUS PLANT ALERT - Hoary Alyssum." *HolisticHorse.com*. Holistic Horse, 04 Oct. 2013. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.

Jenkins, Austin. "Washington Lawmaker Warns Of Noxious Weed After Death Of 'One-In-A-Million' Horse." *NW News Network*. NW News Network, 15 July 2015. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.

"Hoary Alyssum." *Montana Weed Control Association*. MWCA, n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.

"Natural Resources Conservation Service." *Management Alternatives for Hoary Alyssum | NRCS Montana*. USDA, n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2017.



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