



Medium Risk / Impact  
in all regions of the Okanagan

Limited distribution with potential  
to spread further.

# Hoary Alyssum

*Berteroa incana*

**AKA:** Hoary berteroa, hoary false alyssum, hoary Alison, hoary false madwort

## DESCRIPTION

- Annual to short lived perennial
- White flowers 4-6 mm long with 4 deeply notched petals
- Slender taproot
- Erect and branched stems covered with star-shaped hairs (0.3-1.1 m tall)
- All leaves are greenish-grey and lower stems purple
- Flattened oval seed pods are 5-8 mm long, have star-shaped hairs, and are held close to the stem

Hoary alyssum plants can vary in form considerably depending on site-specific conditions such as soil type, nutrient availability, moisture, and competition. These variables may cause them to be simple, slender and unbranched, to partially branched, or even fully branched and rounded. Hoary alyssum is commonly referred to as a biennial, but can also behave as an annual or perennial at times. It reproduces only by seed. The plant emerges as a rosette in early spring and then bolts and grows a cluster of white flowers. From late spring flowers and seeds continue to be produced until the first frost. When acting as a perennial, it over-winters as a rosette and emerges again in the spring.

## HABITAT

In British Columbia, hoary alyssum occurs in the Thompson, Okanagan and Kootenay regions. It prefers dry sandy or gravelly soils and establishes well in dry, disturbed habitat such as pastures, hayfields, roadsides, rangelands and embankments.



L. Scott

Hoary Alyssum Flower



L. Scott

Hoary Alyssum

## IMPACT AND RISKS

- Hoary alyssum can be very troublesome to ranchers, as horses have been known to become intoxicated after eating green or dried hoary alyssum plants.
- Some symptoms associated with severe intoxication include stiffness, fever, diarrhea, intravascular hemolysis, and hypovolemic shock.
- Death has only been recorded in horses eating hay infested with 30-70% hoary alyssum. Ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats, and llamas) are not known to have adverse reactions to it.
- Hoary alyssum can contaminate hay and reduce hay quality and value.

## PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

The most effective way to ensure that your lands do not become infested with hoary alyssum is by prevention. Here are some recommendations to prevent hoary alyssum from invading your property:

- Maintain your crops and natural lands in a healthy, vigorous condition to ensure a competitive plant community; competitive perennial grasses and forbs utilize water and nutrients that would otherwise be readily available to hoary alyssum.
- Regularly patrol your property for hoary alyssum plants and immediately control or remove infestations before seed set.
- Do not leave plants to compost as they may still produce viable seed.
- Cooperate with adjacent landowners and encourage them to prevent hoary alyssum spread.
- Immediately re-vegetate disturbed, bare soils with a suitable seed mixture that provides dense, early colonization to prevent weed invasion.
- Remove plants, plant parts, and seeds from personal gear, clothing, pets, vehicles, and equipment.
- Do not move contaminated soils to a new area.

## TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL

- Small populations of hoary alyssum can be successfully controlled by diligent hand-pulling or hoeing in the spring during seedpod development to prevent seed production.
- Mowing is ineffective on hoary alyssum.
- Continually re-visit sites annually and remove new plants, before they go to seed.
- Re-vegetate managed areas with competitive, desirable plants to compete against re-invasion.
- Bag or tarp plants, plant parts, and seeds before transporting to a designated disposal site (ex. Landfill).
- Chemical control is also an option. Before applying herbicides, read the label for full use and precautionary instructions. For further information on the selection and application of chemicals to protect your crop, contact AgriService BC at 1-888-221-7141 or email [AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca)
- There are no biological controls for hoary alyssum at this time.



Hoary Alyssum



Hoary Alyssum Rosette



Hoary Alyssum Seedpod

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