

STEVE'S Weed of the Month

Viper's Bugloss

Also Known As: blueweed, blue devil

Viper's bugloss is a **Class B Weed**. Non-native species that are either absent from or limited in distribution in some portions of the state but very abundant in other areas. The goals are to **contain** the plants where they are already widespread and **prevent** their spread into new areas.

Viper's bugloss (*Echium Vulgare* L.), originating from Eurasia, is a biennial that reproduces by seed. This invasive plant develops a long, stout taproot that can exceed 2 feet in length. During this weed's first year it forms a rosette; the second year it bolts and produces flowering stems. Stems are erect and branching and reach about 2½ feet in height. The entire plant is hairy. The stems are covered with two types of hair: stout, spreading hairs with a pustulate base marked by a conspicuous dark fleck, and an underlayer of smaller fine hairs. Stem leaves are alternate, oblong to linear-lanceolate, and progressively smaller up the stem. Leaves have white 'speckles' that give the leaves a dimpled appearance. Flowers are funnel-shaped, 5-petaled, and appear in tapering spike-like heads of bright blue to purple flowers. Flowering occurs from late spring to early fall.

This species is best not touched as skin irritation can result from the plant's bristles. Also, this noxious weed is considered poisonous. It contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids that are potentially toxic to livestock, although it is generally unpalatable and can displace desirable grazing plants, particularly if overgrazing occurs.

Viper's bugloss is commonly found in pastures and rangelands, along roadsides, and in disturbed and waste areas.



Rosette



Mature Plant



Seeds



Control Methods

Physical/Mechanical: Viper's bugloss can be handpulled if the soil allows for removal of the taproot, but long sleeves and gloves should be worn to guard against skin irritation. Repeated defoliation by mowing can deplete root reserves and prevent flowering, although the plant can resprout from cut stems.

Chemical: Herbicides can be used to control viper's bugloss. Chemicals that have been effectively used include 2,4-D, metsulfuron and 2,4-D plus dicamba applied to rosettes or bolting plants.

More information can be found in the [PNW Weed Management Handbook](#)

Use pesticides with care. Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

Biological: No biological agents for viper's bugloss control have been authorized for release in the United States, although five potential bioagents are currently being studied.

Questions: contact [Steve Van Vleet](#) or phone (509) 397 - 6290