

# “B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

**Hoary cress whitetop**  
*Lepidium draba*

**Other common names:** Hoary cress, whiteweed, peppergrass, heart-podded, hoary cardaria

**USDA symbol:** LEDR  
**ODA rating:** B



**Introduction:** Whitetop is native to southwest Asia. This invader is now distributed throughout the Pacific Northwest, primarily east of the Cascade mountains. It blankets significant acreages in Oregon competing with desirable grasses and forbs for early season water and nutrients.

**Distribution in Oregon:** The first documented site of whitetop in Oregon was 1909 in Union County. Grant, Baker Crook and Wheeler Counties are host to thousands of acres of the weed.

**Description:** Whitetop is a perennial mustard growing up to two feet tall from an extensive root system. Its lower leaves are blue-green and lance shaped and its upper leaves have two lobes clasping the stem. It produces many white flowers with four tiny petals, giving plant a white, flat-topped appearance. Three known species - lens-podded, globe-podded, and heart-podded whitetop are identified by different shaped seed pods. Whitetop plants die back to the roots in summer as the seeds mature.

**Impacts:** Whitetop is a common weed species on alkaline soils, but is not restricted to them. It forms dense patches that can completely dominate sites, restricting the growth of other species and degrading pastures. The species is not toxic to livestock, but it is not generally grazed either. Tens of thousands of acres can be found in Oregon.

**Biological controls:** No approved biological control agents are available at this time though several have been under review.

