

Q. Meadow Knapweed (*Centaurea pratensis*)

Key Characteristics:

Meadow knapweed is a member of the Sunflower family. It is a perennial that grows 2-4 feet tall, containing many branches each terminating in a single **flower**. **Leaves** are not finely divided like they are with spotted and diffuse knapweed. **Lower leaves** are entire, coarsely lobed, or toothed, while **middle and upper leaves** are entire or toothed. **Flowers** are large pink to purplish-red heads at the end of the branches; **Bracts** are papery, fringed, and brown.

Locations:

Meadow knapweed is rare in Pitkin County, but has been identified in the Little Elk Creek subdivision. This infestation has been monitored and treated since 2006, and is believed to be nearly eradicated.

Biological control:

There are several approved biological control agents for meadow knapweed. For most effective control, use a combination of several different kinds of insects. Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Insectary in Palisade for more information.

Cultural control:

Meadow knapweed tends to form monocultures by eliminating other plants. Therefore, sowing desirable plant species is necessary after the weed is controlled. If a meadow knapweed stand is not too old and grasses are still present, stimulating grass growth by irrigation (where possible) should increase grass competition with knapweed and keep it under continual stress. It will still be necessary to remove flowers before they set seed to prevent infestation of new areas.

Mechanical control:

Plants that are periodically mowed will generally continue to flower and produce seed on shorter plants below the mower blade. Repeated cultivation can be effective if combined with monitoring for and control of re-sprouts.

Chemical control:

Contact Pitkin County Land Management Department for more specific information about herbicide products, application rates, and equipment calibration.

