

Whitetop Hoary Cress

Cardaria draba (L.) Desv.

Taxonomic Classification

Domain: *Eukaryotes*

Kingdom: *Plantae*

Phylum/Division:

Anthophyta

Class: *Dicotyledoneae*

Order: *Capparales*

Family: *Brassicaceae*

Genus: *Cardaria*

Species: *Draba*



Botanical Description

Plants decumbent to ascending with stems to 2 ft tall. Leaves alternate, elliptic to oblong, to 9.8 cm long and to 3.5 cm wide, lower leaves petiolate (with a leaf stem), above sessile (no leaf stem); margin (leaf blade edge) sinuate-dentate to irregularly toothed (see picture above). Flowers in clustered racemes, petals 4, white, apex rounded. Fruit a heart-shaped silicle (2-chambered capsule), 2–3.8 mm long, 3.5–5.7 mm wide; style up to 1 mm on the apex. Dried above-ground stems persistent and tan in color, sometimes with green basal rosette of green leaves into fall.

[5]

Identification Tips

Whitetop is commonly confused with Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and Pennycress (*Thlaspi arvense*). Yarrow has fern-like, highly dissected leaves whereas whitetop has broader leaves, which is the easiest differentiating attribute between the two. Pennycress is easily identified if fruit is present, the fruit being flat and deeply notched at the tip, with no short style present, whereas whitetop has heart-shaped, pointed fruits topped with a bristle-like style [6].

Fun Fact!

Whitetop is edible and some say it tastes like “spicy broccoli”.

(Must be washed before consumption)



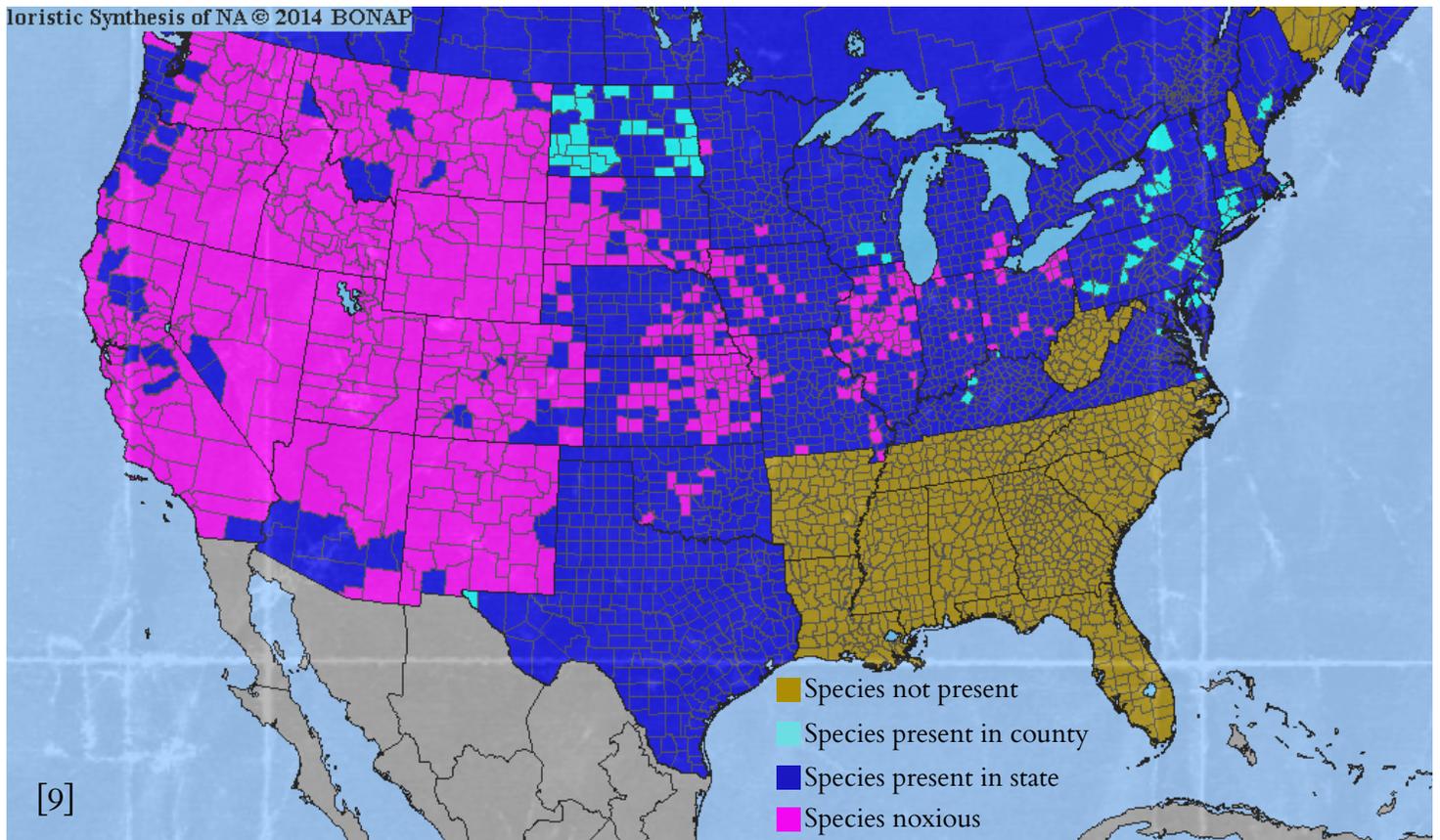
[7] Heart-shaped Silicle with style

Ethnobotanical and Other Uses

Whitetop is edible and leaves are used in salads, though caution is advised when using young leaves. The leaves and seeds are also used for seasoning, the seed often a replacement for pepper. The species has also been rumored to help as a home remedy for flatulence and food poisoning caused by eating fish, though neither is confirmed through medicinal regulation organizations.

[8]

Habitat Range



Conservation Status

Not globally rated, exotic.

[1]

Plant Ecology

Noxious weed common near roadways, farmlands, and pastures. The species can grow in a variety of soils but seems to prefer slightly Alkaline soils, and thrives in strong sun.

[5]

References:

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- [2] Mercadante, M. (2014a). *15405665406_37eb260708_w.jpg*. photograph, Chile.
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[5] Welsh, S. L., Atwood, N. D., Goodrich, S., & Higgins, L. C. (2016). *A Utah flora*. Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum.

[6] Whitetop — *Lepidium draba*. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on September 21, 2023, from <https://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=PDBRA0L020>

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[8] *Lepidium draba* -(L.)Desv. (n.d.). Retrieved September 21, 2023.
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[9] Kartesz, J.T., The Biota of North America Program (BONAP). 2015. *Taxonomic Data Center*. (<http://www.bonap.net/Napa/TaxonMaps/Genus/County/Lepidium>). Chapel Hill, N.C. [maps generated from Kartesz, J.T. 2015. Floristic Synthesis of North America, Version 1.0. Biota of North America Program (BONAP). (in press)]

Information collated by Anne Robinson under the direction of Dr. Ashley N. Egan in collaboration with UVU's summer 2023 BOT 2050 and fall 2023 BOT 4300 classes and through the UVU Exceleerate Program.

