

## HOARY ALYSSUM

*Berteroa incana* (L.) DC.

Plant Symbol = BEIN2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Photo by James Jacobs, USDA NRCS, Bozeman, MT

**Caution: This plant is weedy and may be invasive.**

### Alternate Names:

*Alyssum incanum*, False hoary madwort, hoary berteroa.

**Uses:** The continuously blooming flowers are considered attractive to open areas and around gardens. It is used as vegetative cover in mining and municipal wastelands in the Ukraine and Germany.

### Status:

Hoary alyssum is an aggressive invader in fields of alfalfa, clover, or birdsfoot trefoil and is listed as a state noxious weed in some states. Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use.

### Description:

*Berteroa incana* (L.) DC., hoary alyssum, a member of the mustard family, is an annual to short-lived perennial forb native to east-central Europe and western Asia. It has a slender tap root, star-shaped hairs on the stems, leaves, sepals, and seed pods, and four white, notched petals on flowers clustered at the stem tips. It is invasive along roads, railroads, trails, and gravelly stream and lake

banks, in lawns, farmyards, vacant lots, overgrazed pastures and rangeland, and in hay meadows.

### Adaptation:

Hoary alyssum is adapted to the temperate continental climate characterized by cold winters and hot dry summers, but is found throughout much of the US. Fall seedlings and rosettes are resistant to winterkill, and flowering plants are resistant to summer drought. It grows well on sandy or gravelly soils with poor soil fertility, and is most prolific on dry, disturbed open sites. It is commonly found on limestone and calcareous substrata and less so on acidic soils.

### Establishment:

Seeds can germinate from early spring to late fall, limited mainly by open space and water. Seedlings establishing in early July or sooner can flower and produce seed by early fall. Seedlings establishing in late July or later will remain as rosettes and produce flowers and seeds the following year.

### Management:

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

Hoary alyssum is controlled using 2, 4-D applied at label rates. Spring applications when plants are actively growing and prior to bolting will be most effective. Repeated applications will be needed to target plants regenerating from the seed bank. Reports indicate metsulfuron applied at 0.5 ounce product per acre will control hoary alyssum. Other sulfonyleurea herbicides including chlorsulfuron, and trisulfuron products as well as dicamba, and imazapic products may also be effective. Hand pulling that removes the root crown is effective. Mowing will not control hoary alyssum and may increase infestations by cutting down a shading canopy and spreading seed pods. Regular, repeated mowing to a six-inch stubble height may reduce seed production when combined with irrigation and nutrient management to increase the vigor of desired plants. Shallow tilling that severs the tap root below the root crown will kill hoary alyssum plants. However, this type of disturbance will favor hoary alyssum regeneration from the seed bank. There are no biological control insects available for management of hoary alyssum.

**Pests and Potential Problems:**

See environmental concerns

**Environmental Concerns:**

Hoary alyssum decreases forage value because the woody stems of mature plants are low in crude protein and digestible carbohydrates. Contamination of 30% or more of forage with hoary alyssum is toxic to horses causing laminitis, limb edema, diarrhea, intravascular haemolysis, and hypovolemic shock. The ability of hoary alyssum to persist under dry conditions and its continuous flowering and fruiting enables it to compete with native plants on range and wildlands and reduce biodiversity. In Minnesota it has been implicated in the reduction in species richness of pollinator communities because it attracted a minimal number of pollinating insects.

**Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin):**

None.

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**Citation**

Jacobs, J., Mangold, J. 2008 Plant fact sheet for hoary alyssum (*L. Berteroa incana* (L.) DC.). USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Federal Building, Bozeman, MT 59715

Published December, 2008

Edited: 18 November 2008 JJ

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>