

BABY'S BREATH

(*Gypsophila paniculata* L.)



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State Noxious Weed List: **No.**

Baby's breath is an ornamental plant of Eurasian origin introduced to the U.S. in the 1800s. The plant is a member of the Pinks or Carnation family and is used by the floral industry as a filler in bouquets. The plant escaped cultivation and now infests pasture and rangeland in several areas of the West.

Identification and growth form:

Baby's breath is a perennial with widely branching stems. The plant often grows to 3 feet tall and is easily identified by the presence of many small white flowers. The leaves occur in pairs of up to 4 inches long and end with a point. The number of leaves decreases with increasing plant height and during flowering. The flowers are small, about 1/8 inch, and generally white and five lobed, often with a purple midstripe. Flowering occurs from late June to late August in North Dakota.

Seeds are black, with two to five contained in capsules, and resemble pepper. The seeds can germinate in 10 to 15 days and plants grow rapidly. Each plant can produce 10,000 or more seeds, which are spread when the branches dry, break off and are moved in the wind similar to Russian thistle and kochia. The plant has a large, deep taproot that allows it to grow well in dry and poor soil conditions.

Why is this plant a concern?

Baby's breath forms dense stands and displaces desirable grasses and forbs. Because of the large taproot and the ability to produce millions of seeds in a small area, this plant is difficult to remove once it has established in an area. Baby's breath has been listed as a noxious weed in several Western states.

How do I control this plant?

Chemical. Baby's breath can be controlled with herbicides that contain metsulfuron (Escort or Ally) applied during the bolt to preflower growth stage.

Cultural. Hand-pulling this weed is not practical because of the large taproot. Baby's breath has not become a problem in cropland that is cultivated.

Biological. No biological control agents or pathogens are available for this weed.