

Common Bugloss *Anchusa officinalis*

Common Bugloss is not the most common weed in our repertoire of weeds and that is exactly how the Noxious Weed Board would like to keep it. It has spread from about 14 square miles in 1980 to about 200 square miles by 1987. It is common in the Mead area and has spread out in all directions. It is becoming a threat to alfalfa growers because the plants succulent leaves and stems tend to mold the hay once it is baled.

Anchusa is a member of the Borage family (*boraginaceae*). It is also known by the names Anchusa Bugloss, common Anchusa & Alkanet. Because of its pretty blue flowers and medicinal and dye use, it has found a spot in many home herb and flower gardens. Unfortunately each plant produces over 900 seeds and the seeds can remain viable for several years in the soil.



Common bugloss is a perennial with a deep tap root. The first year, this plant appears as a rosette of basal leaves. It develops a flower stalk by its second year and by the third year it is and reaches a height of one to two feet. It is described as coarse-looking with hairy, hollow stems. Its basal leaves have a leaf stalk and are lance-shaped. The leaves on the flower stems, also lance-shaped, have a shorter petiole and get progressively smaller up the stem. The upper leaves have no petiole. They are alternate, deep green and fleshy, and covered with stiff hairs.



The "fiddleneck" flower stem uncoils as each bud opens. It blooms in the summer and the flowers are deep purple to bright blue, sometimes pink, with a white center. It prefers sandy or gravelly soil. The plant is sometimes confused with blueweed (*Echium vulgare*).

According to the Noxious Weed Control Board there are several methods of chemical and mechanical control. To hand remove the plant, the roots must be cut below the crown.

Several herbicides are recommended: Weedmaster®, Tordon®, or a Banvel®, Escort® and 2,4,D, mix. (Tordon is a restricted use product and may be applied only by a licensed applicator.)

Herbicides should be applied up to the bud stage of growth with at least 0.5% surfactant added to the spray mix. Regardless of the method of control, follow up is important. As with all noxious weeds a continuous effort is required to control Common Bugloss.

For more information on noxious weeds in Washington State, visit the Noxious Weed Board in the Extension Education Center or log on to <http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/index.html>