

Please call 1-866-invader if you suspect you have found this species

Paterson's curse
Echium plantagineum

Other common names: Salvation Jane,
Purple plague

USDA symbol: ECPL
ODA rating: A and T



Introduction: Paterson's curse is native to southern Europe and western Asia. The infestation in Linn County is believed to have come from a wildflower seed mix. Birds, livestock, and equipment movement can facilitate further spread.

Distribution in Oregon: Paterson's curse was first detected in 2003 in Linn County. A second, larger site was confirmed in Douglas County in 2004. Both Oregon sites are under intensive treatment.

Impacts: Paterson's curse is poisonous to grazing animals and is a threat to natural areas. This weed contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids that cause chronic liver damage and death to susceptible animals. This invader is a prolific seed producer enabling rapid spread and displacement of pasture, range, and desirable plants. It is a threat to native habitat with the potential to invade oak woodland, native prairie, and dry upland slopes. Handling plants can cause mild to severe skin irritation and hay fever in some individuals.

Description: Paterson's curse is an erect annual (less often biennial) in the Borage plant family. Plants can be single-stemmed or multi-branched with an abundance of stout hairs on stems and leaves. Flowers are most often blue-purple in color, but may be pink or white. Flowers are borne on fiddleneck or scorpioid-like inflorescences. Two of the five stamens in the flower are longer and project significantly from the joined corolla. In Oregon, blooming starts as early as March and continues through June. Reproduction and spread is by seed. Each flower produces four brown or gray nutlet seeds surrounded by a husk covered in bristles giving them a fuzzy appearance. Seeds are spread by vehicles, farm implements, humans, animal, water, wind, hay, and as a contaminant of commercial seed. Paterson's curse seed has been found in wildflower mixes in Oregon.

Biological controls: No approved biological control agents are available for this invader.

