

THE ENEMY: Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus* L.)

Strategy: This biennial plant grows in disturbed areas with compact soils. This plant's leaves are very pubescent (hairy) on long narrow leaves. The weed sends up a long cylindrical yellow flowered seed-head. The plant can grow up to 8 foot tall but is typically only 4-5 foot tall and since it is a biennial the first year rosettes are typically a silver green color that spreads out to about 2 feet in diameter. This plant is very rigid and can be seen sticking up through the snow and above the normal plants in the spring of the following year (almost resemble a cattail at this stage).

Attack: Since this plant likes open soils found in disturbed areas it can be found anywhere, even in hoof marks made by animals. The plant is troublesome in that it gets fairly thick, is undesirable as a food to animals, and competes for moisture and nutrients with desirable species. It is especially effective at growing through cracks of rocks and disturbed mining and logging soils.

Defense: Mechanical control is very effective with this weed as with most biennial plants. Just ensure that you remove a few inches of the root below the soil surface. Disking and plowing are not very usable as this plant generally shows up on south facing steep slopes. Although there has not been much biological insect research performed on this plant there are a few native insects that can be found in the flowers eating their way through the seeds. Herbicides such as Escort XP, Telar XP, and Opensight are very effective on the plant, but the secret is to add a quality surfactant to help get the herbicide past all those soft fuzzy hairs and into the plant's cuticle where they can do some good. Proper identification is key so consult with your weed professional to manage this weed.