

Invasive Species Highlight

Crown Vetch

Crown vetch or axseed (*Securigera varia*) is a perennial plant in the pea family that is native to Europe and southeast Asia. Introduced to the United States in the 1950s as groundcover, a bank and slope stabilizer along roads and waterways, and as a green fertilizer crop. It is now an invasive species that is widely distributed throughout Minnesota and is a restricted species, making it illegal to import, sell, or transport.

Environmental Impact

Crown vetch is an aggressive spreading plant that outcompetes native species, reducing diversity and habitat, and can create a monoculture habitat. As a legume, it alters soil nitrogen levels, making it harder for native plants to survive. Though originally planted for erosion control, it may not stabilize slopes effectively. It also contains chemicals that make it unpalatable to grazing animals, with reports on its toxicity are conflicting.



Identification

- Stems are long and can form a tangled mat.
- Leaves are dark green, feather-like, and have compound leaflets. Each stalk has 11-25 pairs of oblong leaflets occurring in odd numbers.
- Flowers bloom May through August and are clustered in flat-topped, pea-like umbels. They grow in 14-20 flower clusters and can range in color from pink / lavender to white.
- Seeds are slender that are within finger-like pods. They can remain viable in the soil for 15 years.
- Roots spread through rhizomes and can grow to ten feet in length.



Look-alikes

Cow vetch (*Vicia cracca*) - Invasive - flowers arranged in a line along stalk
Hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa*) - Invasive - flowers arranged in a line along stalk
American vetch (*Vicia americana*) - Native - Has a 3 pointed stipule



Report new occurrences

Submit a report through EDDMaps, iNaturalist, Seek or by contacting your local SWCD.

Visit our website for additional Invasive Species Highlights - winonaswcd.org

For any questions, call Abbi Hoffman - 507-523-2171 x113

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References and Resources

“Crown vetch ” Gupta et al. *University of Minnesota Extension*. <https://extension.umn.edu/identify-invasive-species/crown-vetch>

“Crown vetch or axseed (*Securigera varia*)” *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/herbaceous/crownvetch.html>

“Crown vetch” *Minnesota Department of Agriculture*. <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/weedcontrol/noxiouslist/crownvetch>

“*Securigera varia* (Crown Vetch)” *Minnesota Wildflowers*. <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/crown-vetch>



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