

**Bargain Bugs Offered by Grand County Weed Board**  
**By Janet Lowe**  
**For the Grand County Weed Board**

There's a pretty little flower that causes big problems in pastures, riparian areas, roadsides and disturbed areas throughout Utah. Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa Lam.*) is a member of the Aster family, Thistle tribe and is an annual or short-lived perennial that reproduces by seed only. It is a tough competitor and rapidly invades and dominates other plants. The most common method of spreading is via the tires of farm, ranch and recreational vehicles.

In Grand County, Castle Valley, the loop road, and other isolated areas throughout Moab Valley and Spanish Valley are common for invasions of diffuse knapweed.

Fortunately, this pretty little flower has some natural enemies. The root boring weevil (*Cyphocleonus achates*), seed head weevil (*Larinus minutus*), and root-boring beetle (*Sphenoptera jugoslavica*). These bugs are the latest biological weapon against the invasion of diffuse knapweed in Grand County.

The Grand County Weed Board has been fighting noxious weeds in the area with biological warfare for over a decade. The root-boring weevil, seed head weevil, and root-boring beetle were introduced in the county between 1995 to 1997. During the past five to seven years, these warrior bugs have had a chance to reproduce. They are now ready to be collected and distributed elsewhere to help control diffuse knapweed.

On Wednesday, June 12, the Grand County Weed Board and guests from other nearby Utah counties will meet at the Porcupine Ranch road at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this outdoor get-together will be to collect bugs. Participants will be provided with collecting mitts and other appropriate equipment to scoop up and sort the bugs.

"You collect them, and they're yours to release on your own property or areas where you know there is a diffuse knapweed problem," said Tim Higgs, Grand County Weed Board Supervisor.

Higgs reports that to purchase the bugs consumers might have to pay anywhere from 50 cents to one dollar for each bug.

"So, not only is this kind of exciting in terms of controlling diffuse knapweed without chemicals, it's a bargain to boot. We're hoping lots of people will show up and help gather bugs," said Higgs.

To reach the Porcupine Ranch Road, take the Castle Valley Road turn off from Highway 128, the river road, and follow that road until you reach the old Castleton Cemetery turnoff. Turn right at this intersection and follow the dirt road to the gait. Bugs will be gathered from 2:00 p.m. through 5:00 p.m. Wear sunscreen, a hat, and other protective clothing.

For more information contact the Grand County Weed Department at 259-1369.