Hairy Vetch

Vicia villosa Roth

Common Names: Hairy vetch, winter vetch, fodder vetch, woollypod vetch, sand vetch, wooly vetch, Russian vetch, or Siberian vetch.

Native Origin: Europe and Asia

Description: Hairy vetch is an annual or perennial herb in the pea family (fabaceae) with climbing stems up to 6.5 feet. The whole plant has a white-woolly appearance because of the long soft hairs. A shallow taproot system develops strong lateral branches. Leaves are compound pinnate with 4-12 pairs of opposite leaflets tapering towards the apex with 2-3 branched, terminal tendrils. Self-fertilized purple to blue flowers of 10-20 are borne on long stalks arising at the base of the leaves. Elongated flattened pods contain 2-8 rounded seeds ranging from dark brown to grey-black in color. Hairy vetch has a rapid growth rate.

Habitat: It grows best in the dry sandy soils of disturbed fields and thickets. It is adapted to a range of soils from fine- to coarse-textured but not acidic or saline soils with a pH range from 4.9-8.2.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in MI, OR, and WA.

Ecological Impacts: Vetches have been introduced into the US as ornamentals, cover crops, erosion control and as 'smother corps', to control weeds in agricultural fields. Hairy vetch has escaped from cultivation and is considered invasive in some areas. It can crowd out native plant species.

Toxicity: The entire plant is toxic. Common signs of intoxication in include dermatitis, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, loss of hair, and in some cases death.

Control and Management:

- **Manual**- Pull small infestations before seeds develop, to free native plants. Hairy vetch can be killed close mowing at peak flower season. Burning is also an option.
- **Chemical**- It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as clopyralid. Follow label and state requirements.

References: www.forestimages.org, http://plants.usda.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien, www.fao.org, http://daffodil.plantbio.uga.edu, http://www.dnr.state.mn.us, www.sarep.ucdavis.edu, http://weeds.ippc.orst.edu, Rich Hansen, Entomologist, US DA-APHIS-PPQ-CPHST, National Weed Management Laboratory