

Washington Invasive Ranking System

Washington Natural Heritage Program

Nasturtium officinale (Watercress)

Assessed by

Regina Johnson (Assistant Natural Areas Ecologist, Westside, Washington Dept. of Natural Resources)
4 January 2024 (WIRS Version 1.5)

Ecological Impact Rank: **Moderate (63)**

Confidence: **High (67)**

Management Difficulty Rank: Moderate (53)

Confidence: Moderate (50)

Biological Characteristics of Invasiveness: High (89)

Confidence: High (71)

Concern Related to Distribution and Abundance: High (78)

Confidence: Moderate (60)



Photo Credit: Keir Morse 2008, used under Creative Commons license (CalPhotos, 2024).

Ranking Notes

Rapid assessment only, based primarily on professional expertise.

Legal Listings

[Washington State Weed Board](#): Monitor list

[Washington Invasive Species Council](#): No

Section 1: Distribution and Abundance

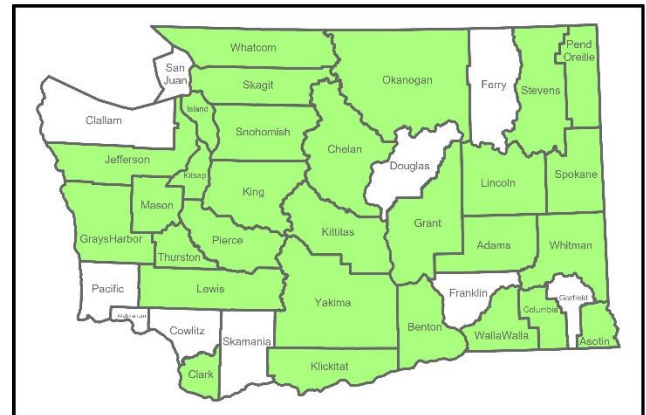


Figure 1. Distribution of counties where *Nasturtium officinale* has been documented in Washington State (CPNWH, 2023; EDDMapS, 2023; iNaturalist Contributors, 2023).

Q1: Current Range Size in Washington

Rating: High

Confidence: Moderate

Nasturtium officinale is found in 74% of counties in Washington State (CPNWH, 2023; EDDMapS, 2023; iNaturalist Contributors, 2023).

Source: Herbarium records and other observations

Q2: Current Trend in Total Range

Rating: Low

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q3: Proportion of Potential Range Currently Unoccupied

Rating: High

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q4: Local Range Expansion or Change in Abundance

Rating: High

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q5: Diversity of Ecosystems Invaded

Ecosystem types: Shallow Water Wetland (Aquatic),
Emergent Open Wetland

Rating: Low

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Section 2: Biological Characteristics

Q6: Aggressive Mode of Reproduction

Rating: Yes

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q7: Innate Potential for Long-Distance Dispersal

Rating: Yes

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q8: Potential to be Spread by Human Activities

Rating: Yes

Confidence: High

The assessor has observed rapid spread via highway ditches. Spread may be aided by roadside mowing and ditching equipment.

Source: Professional expertise

Q9: Allelopathy

Rating: No

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q10: Competitive for Limiting Abiotic Factors

Rating: Yes

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q11: Growth Form

Rating: Yes

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q12: Germination Requirements

Rating: Yes

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q13: Invasiveness of Other Plants in Genus

Rating: Yes

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q14: Shade Tolerance

Rating: Moderate

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q15: Disturbance Tolerance

Rating: Yes

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q16: Propagule Persistence

Rating: Unknown

Confidence: Not Rated

Source:

Q17: Palatability

Rating: No, plant is palatable

Confidence: High

Watercress species produce compounds that deter aquatic invertebrate herbivores, but do not appear to deter mammalian herbivores.

Source: Professional expertise

Section 3: Ecological Impact

Q18: Impact on Ecosystem Abiotic Processes

Abiotic Processes: Hydrology, Geomorphology, Light availability

Rating: High

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q19: Impact on Ecosystem Structure

Rating: Low

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q20: Impact on Ecosystem Composition

Rating: High

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q21: Impact on Particular Native Species

Rating: Not Rated

Confidence: Not Rated

Source:

Q22: Observed Ability to Invade Undisturbed Ecosystems

Rating: Low

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q23: Observed Ability to Invade Naturally Disturbed Ecosystems

Rating: Yes

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Section 4: Management Difficulty

Q24: General Management Difficulty

Rating: Low

Confidence: High

Source: Professional expertise

Q25: Minimum Time Commitment

Rating: High

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q26: Impacts of Management on Native Species

Rating: Low

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional expertise

Q27: Inaccessibility of Invaded Areas

Rating: Low

Confidence: Moderate

Source: Professional Expertise

Q28: Sociopolitical Implications of Management

Rating: Low/Moderate

Confidence: Low

There may be some objections to management from those who forage this palatable species.

Source: Professional expertise

Additional Comments

Nasturtium officinale is considered noxious and/or invasive in 46 states (Moore, 2025).

References

- CalPhotos. 2024. Berkeley Natural History Museums, University of California, Berkeley. <https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/>. Accessed: December 17, 2024.
- Consortium of Pacific Northwest Herbaria (CPNWH). 2023. Consortium of Pacific Northwest Herbaria Specimen Database. <http://www.pnwherbaria.org/index.php>. Accessed: October 17, 2023.
- EDDMapS. 2023. Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System. The University of Georgia - Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. <http://www.eddmaps.org>. Accessed: October 15, 2023.
- iNaturalist Contributors. 2023. iNaturalist Research-grade Observations, Accessed via GBIF.org. <https://doi.org/10.15468/ab3s5x>. Accessed: October 5, 2023.
- Moore D. 2025. Plant of the Week: Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*). US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/nasturtium_officinale.shtml. Accessed: February 6, 2025.

