

Repelling the knapweed invasion

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The problem of invasive species may seem remote from most people's lives. But in some parts of the United Kingdom, an invasive plant creates a problem that hits home, literally. That's because the presence of invasive knotweed on a property prevents potential buyers from obtaining a mortgage. This destructive plant from Asia, which can tear down walls and rip up roads, is also putting down roots in many parts of Canada.

Research by Judith Myers, an ecology professor emerita at the University of British Columbia, shows that the tide can be turned. At this week's meeting of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS) in [Vancouver](#), Myers will talk about how her research has helped reduce the threat of a similar plant—knapweed. The rangeland plant had spread through the interior of British Columbia, ruining pastureland for cattle and impacting local economies. Following extensive testing of European insects to find those that would feast on the knapweed but leave everything else alone, a beetle was introduced to North America that has caused a significant and rapid decline in knapweed.

For every one dollar spent on the control program, there was \$17 in economic benefit in British Columbia. Considering that a 2008 estimate put the annual cost of invasive weeds at \$65 million in British Columbia alone, the success of the program is a win for the economy and for the ecology.

Myers will present her findings at the AAAS session Transcending

Interdisciplinary Research Barriers: Best Practices for Mobilizing Knowledge.

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