

# Baby's Breath

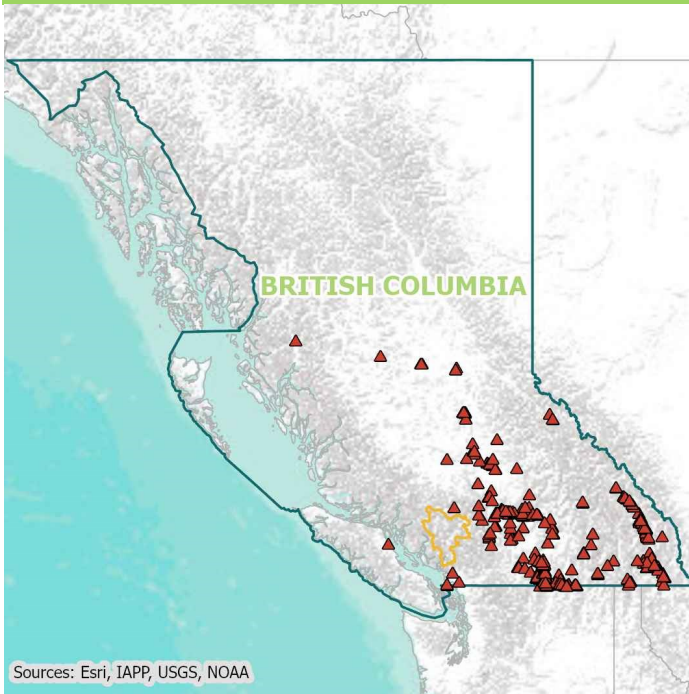
## *Gypsophila paniculata*

(A.K.A. Maiden's breath, Bristol fairy)

FACT SHEET

Squamish: Prevent | Whistler: Prevent | Pemberton: Prevent

### DISTRIBUTION



**Origin:** Baby's Breath comes from Eurasia and was brought to North America as a garden ornamental. It is now often used in bouquets as an ornamental filler.

**Habitat:** Baby's Breath can survive in many environments with variations in temperature and moisture levels. It is most aggressive in areas of low rainfall, as it thrives in dry, sandy, stony sites and is drought tolerant. It is commonly found in lightly grazed pastures, roadside ditches, hay fields and abandoned fields.

**Reproduction:** Baby's Breath reproduces both by seed and vegetatively. One plant produces around 13,000 seeds a year, which remain viable in the soil for 1 to 2 years.

Baby's Breath reproduces vegetatively when shoot production increases in mature plants.

### IDENTIFICATION



**Flowers:** Small (6 - 8 mm in diameter) and white, but occasionally pink, with 5 small petals. Numerous flowers grow on short (1 - 20 mm) stalks in highly-branched clusters.

**Stems:** Erect, single to multiple stems that be between 40 cm and 1 m tall. Stems are swollen at the nodes, branched near the crown and blueish-green in colour.

**Leaves:** Opposite, lance-shaped and 2 - 9 mm wide. Leaves grow from the swollen nodes on stems and can be either smooth or hairy. They occur mainly on the upper parts of the stem.

**Seeds:** Small, black, kidney-shaped seeds.

**Fruit:** Small capsules containing 2 - 5 seeds.

**Roots:** Deep taproot that can extend up to 4 m deep.

#### Similar Species:

- **Native:** Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*)

Pearly Everlasting has narrow, greyish leaves.

Updated June 2023

**Vectors of Spread:** Seeds are spread when mature stalks are blown free by the wind and roll around, similarly to tumbleweeds. Seeds may be spread both short and long distances.

Baby's Breath seeds are also sold in nurseries and grown in garden settings, as this invasive plant is often used as a filler in flower bouquets or arrangements and as a garden ornamental.

#### WHAT CAN I DO?

**Baby's Breath is NOT currently found throughout the Sea to Sky Region, so PREVENTION is key:**

- Regularly monitor properties for weed infestations.
- Ensure soil and gravel are uncontaminated before transport.
- Don't unload, park, or store equipment or vehicles in infested areas; remove plant material from any equipment, vehicles, or clothing used in such areas and wash equipment and vehicles at designated cleaning sites before leaving infested areas.
- Check wildflower mixes to ensure that they do not contain Baby's Breath.
- Ensure that plants are disposed of in a garbage bag if found in floral arrangements to prevent seeds from spreading. **Do NOT compost.**

**Baby's Breath can be controlled by:**

- **Cultural Control:** Alternate cropping and summer fallow provide control by reducing soil disturbance and allowing the reintroduction of native plants.
- **Mechanical Control:** Baby's Breath can tolerate shallow tilling, but extensive cultivation can effectively control an infestation. Plants will re-sprout if not severed below the root crown, so hand-pulling is only effective if the root crown is severed several cm's below ground level. Mowing can prevent seed production but is not an effective control method.
- **Chemical Control:** Several herbicides have been tested on Baby's Breath infestations, but none have succeeded unless used at high rates. Spot treatments of glyphosate can provide some control and should prevent seed production after several treatments. We recommend that any herbicide application is carried out by a person holding a valid BC Pesticide Applicator Certificate. Before selecting and applying herbicides, you must review and follow herbicide labels and application rates; municipal, regional, provincial and federal laws and regulations; species-specific treatment recommendations, and site-specific goals and objectives.
- **Biological Control:** There is no biocontrol available for Baby's Breath at this time.

**If you suspect you have found Baby's Breath anywhere in the Sea to Sky region:**

**Contact** the Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council to report and for the most recent, up to date control methods. All reports will be kept confidential.

**References:** Alberta Invasive Species Council, CABI, Government of BC, iNaturalist, Invasive Species Council of BC, Lillooet Regional Invasive Species Society, Okanagan Invasive Species Online, Pacific Northwest Pest Management Handbooks, Southern Interior Weed Management Committee, UC Davis Weed Research and Information Center.

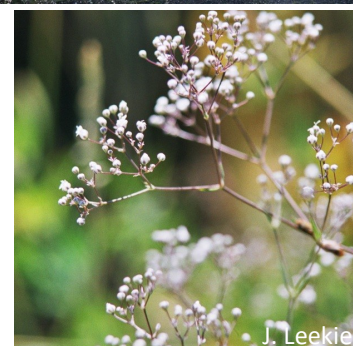
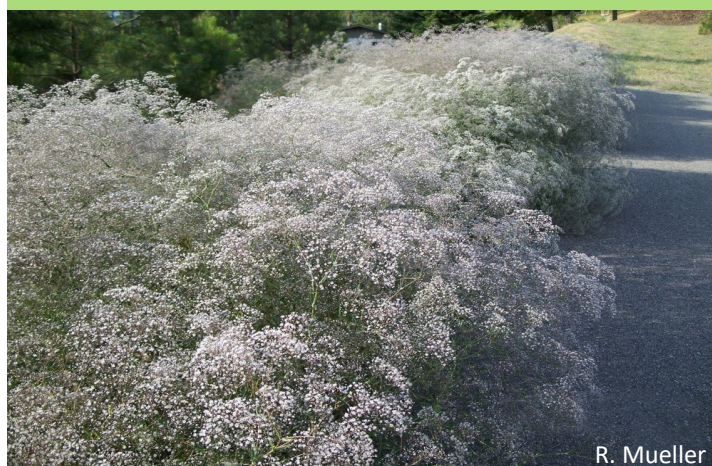
## IMPACTS

#### Ecological:

- Outcompetes native and introduced grasses.
- Difficult to remove once established due to its large taproot and ability to produce a large amount of seeds.
- Mildly toxic to household pets (cats, dogs) due to the toxin gypsogenin.

#### Economic:

- Diminishes the protein value of hay when mixed in with it, therefore decreasing hay forage value.



## REPORT SIGHTINGS

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Updated June 2023