

Dyer's Woad



flowers



leaf



fruit

Dyer's Woad

Genus: *Isatis*

Species: *tinctoria*

Priority Listing: 1B

Winter annual,

short-lived **perennial**,

biennial

Dyer's woad is native to central Asia, eastern Siberia, and western Asia. The dyer's woad plant produces a blue substance that was used for centuries as a form of dye for pottery, textiles, and body paint.

Dyer's woad was introduced into North America during the colonial period for its use as a dye before indigo dye was available. Dyer's woad escaped cultivation and spread to the West when the seed from it was mixed in with alfalfa seed, and it can still be seen in today's landscapes.

Dyer's woad tends to **inhabit** dry, rocky soils commonly found on hillsides and can usually be found in dry pastures, uncultivated fields, roadsides, waste areas, forest and rangelands.

This plant is a biennial that must overwinter (**vernalize**) before it produces a seed. After the plant makes seed it dies.

Dyer's woad has bluish-green alternate **lanceolate** leaves that are covered with fine hairs. Leaves have

a cream colored mid-vein; which is especially noticeable on the **rosettes**. This plant can grow up to 4' in height and the taproot can reach depths of up to 5'!

Dyer's woad grows very quickly and can produce up to 20 stems that are capable of setting seed very quickly. The flowers of dyer's woad are yellow with four petals 1/8" long and wide; flowers are found in clusters at the ends of the branch tips. When dyer's woad sets seeds, it produces large blackish-blue teardrop-shaped seed pods.



Photo courtesy of Gerald D. Carr, University of Oregon

Biennial: a plant that lives two years, usually flowering in the second year

Lanceolate: Tapering from a rounded base toward an apex; lance-shaped

Perennial: a plant whose life spans several years

Rosettes: circular clusters of leaves that radiate from a center of a plant, close to the ground, as in the dandelion

Taproot: a main single root of a plant, generally growing straight down

Vernalize: a necessary chilling period process for some plants in order to produce flowers, or for some seeds in order to germinate