

Landowner / Operator Newsletter

FALL

2017

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Board Meetings are open to the public and held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 pm from March — September and 1:pm from October— February
- Plan now for fall applications
- Staff is available for education and outreach
- Future Events-Look for our booth at the BF Fair and Rodeo Aug 22 — Aug 26
- Visit our website at fcweedboard.com

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Scotch thistle — A Plant With A Seedy Nature

Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), a Class B noxious weed in Franklin County, has kept staff very busy this season. Typically, this vigorous biennial germinates in the fall producing a large rosette the first year, bolting early the following year, flowering, and setting seed June through September. With favorable conditions, Scotch thistle may behave as an annual or short-lived perennial. Seeding is the plants sole means of reproduction and its seedy nature helps it survive. Seeds contain a water soluble germination inhibitor causing a high percentage of seed to remain dormant in the soil. An unusually wet year produced favorable conditions for seeds to break dormancy. Franklin County is experiencing an explosion of Scotch thistle plants so FCWB staff are educating land owners about its biology and control.

Scotch thistle plants can be dug up prior to flowering to prevent seed production. Digging is effective for small infestations provided the root system is destroyed but is a short-term solution as the seed bank remains viable. For larger infestations, fall herbicide applications are most effective. Rosettes are much easier to kill prior to winter survival. Fall applications of systemic herbicides are transported to roots and other nutrient storage compartments as the plant prepares for dormancy.



Scotch thistle plants can exceed 8 feet in height and 6 feet in width. Many types of birds eat Scotch thistle seed. If you spot Scotch thistle on your land be sure to check nearby trees. The area beneath them may be the source of your infestation.

Dalmatian Domination



Dalmatian toadflax

Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*) is a perennial grassland invader native to the Mediterranean region. It is listed as a class B noxious weed in Franklin County. This plant has somewhat woody, upright stems that can grow up to 3ft tall with yellow snapdragon type flowers that bloom from May to August. Leaves are waxy, heart-shaped, and clasp the stem.

Dalmatian toadflax has the ability to spread by seed and lateral roots. It crowds out valuable forage and is especially problematic in grasslands and farmland. Many seeds can stay viable in the soil for as long as 10 years! Since it is a perennial, chemical control should be done in late spring when plants begin to flower or fall before the plants die back. Isolated plants can be dug up fairly effectively; however, new shoots will re-sprout from any remaining lateral roots.

Yellow starthistle and Scotch thistle are problematic in the dryland region of Franklin County.



Rush skeletonweed flower and rosette



Noxious Weed Control - Not A One Size Fits All

When we think of noxious weed management, most people tend to think it only applies to agricultural areas, roadsides, and irrigation ditches; however, many noxious weeds have escaped from gardens, been spread by equipment, wildlife, and even pets. The responsibility to manage these weeds is shared by all but there is not a one size fits all approach. Each occurrence of a noxious weed must be managed with the best approach for the situation.

Certain weeds such as yellow starthistle and Scotch thistle are problematic in the dryland region, causing livestock poisonings and serving as poor nourishment. Residual herbicides work well on thistles in rangeland without affecting grass forage.

Rush skeletonweed is becoming more of a problem throughout all of Franklin County. Found along roadsides adjacent to both irrigated and dryland farm ground, it also infests undeveloped lots within city limits. Management of skeletonweed in each situation is different because of the various land uses. A residual herbicide may be a good option in the dryland but may cause crop injury in the irrigated area.

Equally disturbing is the presence of noxious weeds on industrial sites, public spaces, undeveloped lots, and residential landscapes within city limits. The noxious weeds mentioned above are present on properties and will invade nearby cropland, flower and vegetable gardens, parks, and may be detrimental to health. The use of herbicides within the city is not always practical given population density and sensitive plant material yet, noxious weeds still need to be controlled. Digging them out or properly timed mowings may be the most practical control measure to keep weeds from maturing to bloom or flowering stage.

Keeping noxious weeds from spreading helps the community look vibrant and attractive while sustaining the agricultural productivity and rich heritage of Franklin County.

The Basics

The use of herbicides is common in noxious weed control as part of an integrated management approach. Knowledge of the target weed’s growth cycle aids land managers in making properly timed applications with an herbicide that produces the best result. Weeds are classified as annual, perennial or biennial. The definitions below provide a brief description of each type’s biology.

Annual Weed- Completes life cycle in one growing season or calendar year, flowering for a longer time in order to produce as much seed as possible.

Biennial Weed- Takes two years to complete its life cycle.

Perennial Weed- Continues to grow until reaching maturity (usually 2 years or longer); may have vegetative structures (rhizomes, stolons) allowing them to reproduce without seed.

Annual weeds produce solely from seed and can be controlled through the use of pre-emerge herbicides applied prior to seed germination. Contact herbicides should be applied prior to production of flowering stalks (a growth stage known as bolting).

Fall is an excellent time to manage biennial and perennial weeds. Spring growth is rapid and control is more difficult when the weeds are putting energy into reproducing. In fall, systemic herbicides will move into the root systems and vegetative structures and weaken the weeds energy reserves.

Annual	Biennial	Perennial
kochia	diffuse knapweed	Canada thistle
puncturevine	spotted knapweed	Ravenna grass
yellow starthistle	Scotch thistle	rush skeletonweed
		Dalmatian toadflax

The Ravenna Dilemma

In our spring newsletter we featured Ravenna grass, a Class B-designate noxious weed in Franklin County. Staff has worked tirelessly over the past two years to educate landowners on the invasive nature of this escaped, ornamental grass. A sizeable infestation on the Columbia River remains our largest discovery to date. The infestation was dense and widespread requiring immediate treatment and follow up visits. Ongoing monitoring of the site occurs as part of an early detection, rapid response approach to identify young, volunteer plants. Initially focusing on the prevention of new infestations in sensitive areas our attention now turns to residential neighborhoods, the primary source of the seed. Progress continues as we have had great success working with property owners in removal of Ravenna grass from their landscapes. If you think you may have Ravenna grass on your property please contact our office so we may assist you with a plan for its removal.

If you fail
to plan,
plan to
fail.

Sage Words From Our Coordinator

We are seeing the results of an extremely wetter than normal fall and winter. Several of our noxious weeds have unfortunately, done very well during this unusually wet spring. Yellow starthistle, Rush skeletonweed, Scotch thistle, and Canada thistle have all emerged this summer with a vengeance. Please keep your eyes peeled for these and other noxious weeds around your property. If you have questions as to the identity of any weed, you are welcome to send a picture to us in an email or text to the following email addresses, tharris@co.franklin.wa.us or fcwb@co.franklin.wa.us

This spring and summer Franklin County Weed Board Staff has worked diligently with agencies and land owners to do as many early applications on weed infestations as possible. We have cleaned up a large Kochia area at Sacajawea Park allowing the grasses to recover. While there is still a substantial amount of work to be done, we have seen a marked improvement in the looks of the park. Come see for yourself!

Now is the time to begin planning fall applications. We will be happy to help you come up with a viable plan of attack that ensures a greater chance for a successful outcome in your noxious weed control endeavors. Todd Harris, Program Coordinator

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For Our Wee Weed Warriors

Weed Word Search

S U O I X O N U S S
P E R E N N I A L D
L A I N N E I B E E
T H I S T L E E J E
L A U N N A W F I S

ANNUAL
PERENNIAL
SUN

BIENNIAL
SCOTCH
THISTLE

NOXIOUS
SEEDS
WEED