

FC Noxious Weed Control Best Management Practices



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Saltcedar

Tamarix ramosissima

Family: Tamaricaceae

Class B-Designate Noxious Weed
Control Required

Background Information

Saltcedar is of the Tamaricaceae family. It was introduced into the United States from Europe in the 1800's as a plant to help control erosion and act as a windbreak. It was valued as a landscape ornamental for its wispy appearance and bright pink flowers. In its native range saltcedar grows unchecked, accustomed to harsh landscapes with little rain. By the mid-1900's it lost favor with farmers because of its greedy water usage. Saltcedar is a versatile plant, adapting to many habitats from moist soils to seasonally saturated at the surface. It quickly displaced the native willow, cottonwood, hackberry and box elder along rivers because of high water consumption and its ability to secrete salts into the soil. The flowers of saltcedar are arranged in spikes, blooming all summer. It reproduces by seed and re-sprouts vigorously from roots if the top portion of the plant is damaged or removed.

Saltcedar is on the WA State quarantine list. It is prohibited to transport, buy, sell, offer for sale, or distribute plants or plant parts, seeds in packets, blends or wildflower mixes of this species into or within the state of Washington. See WAC 16-752 for details.



Pink flowers occur in many slender spikes forming dense masses on the ends of cedar-like branches.

Impacts

Saltcedar is an aggressive colonizer that has displaced native vegetation because of its ability to adapt to various site conditions. It has a deep taproot extending more than 10 feet to reach groundwater and extensive lateral roots that branch freely to rob natives of moisture. Saltcedar secretes salt that forms a crust above and below ground inhibiting the survival of other plants. Its root system can clog irrigation canals making it a threat to agriculture.



Saltcedar growing on the bank of a canal

Key Identifying Traits

- ◆ Leaves are small, alternate and scale-like, resembling cedar or juniper leaves.
- ◆ Highly branched slender stems. Saplings have smooth reddish brown bark that becomes furrowed with age.
- ◆ Flowers are bright pink with 5 petals.
- ◆ May have the appearance of shrub or small tree.



Close-up of leaves and young bark

Biology and Ecology

- ◆ Deciduous shrub or small tree growing from 5-20 feet tall
- ◆ Increases salinity of surface soil making conditions inhospitable for native plants.
- ◆ Saturated soils, a high water table and little competition from other plants creates ideal growing conditions.
- ◆ Mature plants can produce half a million seeds each year which are wind and water dispersed. Can also reproduce vegetatively by sending up shoots from an extensive secondary branching root system.



A tuft of hairs on one end of seeds aids in dispersal

Control Measures

Prevention: Control efforts should focus first on preventing establishment in new areas. Organized detection surveys are recommended which could locate new plants as they appear. Preventive measures include planting natives or spreading seed in disturbed areas and treating satellite populations before plants develop extensive roots.

Biological: None

Cultural: Promote desired vegetation to provide competition. Grazing with goats or other livestock has been used in some western states for suppression on sparse stands or on young regrowth.

Mechanical: It may be possible to manually remove seedlings and saplings, including roots, before the plants mature. Make sure to remove the entire root as plants can grow back from root fragments.

Chemical: Small, young trees can be controlled with foliar applications of herbicides such as triclopyr or Imazapyr, preferably from late summer to fall. Basal bark treatment of triclopyr and oil can be applied as long as the ground is not frozen. Large, well established trees will require a cut stump treatment. As with any established infestations repeated applications and follow-up is necessary.

ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS, THE LABEL IS THE LAW

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Photos: FCWB; Tynin Fries/Cronkite News; Teton County Weed & Pest; Rich Old, Bugwood.org