



## Weed Awareness

### Find us on the web



Accessing information about the City of Lincoln departments and Lancaster County agencies is easy using their combined web page. On the Internet simply go to <http://interlinc.ci.lincoln.ne.us> and you will find the InterLinc home page. You may choose any city department or county agency. Scroll to the bottom of the page for weed control under county agencies. The following information is available along with links to related sites:

- Weed Control Authority mission and goals
  - Frequently asked questions
  - Tell us how we are doing
  - Contacting the Weed Control Authority
- Articles**
- Weed complaint form
  - What are the noxious weeds? (includes pictures and a short description)
  - Extent of noxious weeds in the county
  - What are weeds and worthless vegetation?
  - Programs
  - City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program
  - Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Plan
  - 2000 Annual Plan
  - City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program
  - Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Program
  - Monthly report
  - Recommended noxious weed controls
  - Musk and plumeless thistles
  - Leafy spurge
  - Canada thistle
  - Planning tips for noxious weed control in CRP contracts
  - Preventing noxious weeds
  - Planting prairie grass & wildflowers
  - Purple loosestrife (*lythrum salicaria*)
  - Invader species – tomorrow’s weed challenges
  - Purple loosestrife is not just another pretty plant
  - Why eliminate ornamental *lythrum* plantings
  - Roadside noxious weed dissemination control
  - Test your knowledge about Nebraska weeds

## Weed free forage program

When forages are transported, be it across the road or across the United States, the potential for the spread of weeds is present. A regional weed free forage program was formulated and implemented to prevent the spread of weeds from one location to another. There is a growing demand in all of North America for the use of certified weed free forage and mulch as a preventative measure to limit the spread of noxious weeds. The North American Weed Management Association developed the North American Weed Free Forage Program. These standards have been adopted by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. The standards are designed:

1. to provide some assurance to all participants that forage certified through this program meets a minimum acceptable standard;
2. to provide continuity between the various provinces and states in the program; and
3. to limit the spread of noxious weeds though forage and mulch.

The Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Authority

will, upon request, inspect any forage prior to harvest as to the presence or absence of the designated noxious weeds of the participating states and provinces. The forage is required to be inspected in the field of origin prior to cutting or harvesting. Forage containing any noxious weeds or other listed weeds, may be certified if prescribed treatments are followed. An inspection certificate will document that the requirements were met. Interstate shipments of forages must be accompanied by a transit certificate and/or certification marking issued by the Weed Control Authority in the state of origin. Shipments into restricted areas not accompanied by the proper transit certificate or certification marking may be rejected.

State and regional lists of available certified weed free forage are maintained and provided to potential customers. There is potential for increased value forage.

Please contact our office for assistance with the certification process or if you have questions about this program.

## The truth about invasive plants

The terms “non-native,” “exotic,” “alien,” “pest plant,” “problem species” and “noxious weed” have been used for plants from other continents or distant parts of another country which disrupt native plant communities and other desirable vegetation. Most non-native plants do not become problems, but too often plants out of their natural range crowd out natives and create adverse economic impacts.

You can help control known invasive plants and avoid introducing new threats by understanding the problem:

### What characteristics make invasive plants a problem?

**High productivity.** More seeds mean more seedlings. Purple loosestrife produces hundreds of thousands of seeds or more, per plant. By prolific seed production, they quickly establish in disturbed areas, crowd or shade out other plants, gradually spreading into less disturbed areas.

**Seed dispersal.** Exotics whose seeds easily get around, tend to quickly surround. *Sericea lespedeza* seeds are eaten by birds, which deposit undigested seeds everywhere on the fly.

**Growth period or seasonal advantages.** When sunlight and soil conditions are right for growth, exotics will grow, even if the season has shifted from their home and the local native weeds are dormant.

**Lack of natural controls.** Insects and plant diseases seldom travel to new habitats with their exotic host.

**How do plants move from their natural range to new, distant places?** Accidentally and when well-intentioned people move them. Eurasian watermilfoil seeds and plant parts traveled from Europe to the eastern U. S. coast in ship ballast, then spread to the Midwest by waterbirds and boats. Exotic modes of travel: Ship ballast/boat bilge, boat propellers, bird ingestion, floodwaters, nursery sales, contaminated fill soil and with agricultural seed.

**Whose problem is it?** Exotic plant control costs millions of dollars each year. Herbicides, labor and research top the bill in the fight against plants which threaten to clog waterways, ruin fisheries, turn pasture to wasteland, compete with agricultural crops, shade out forest regeneration and overrun natural areas.

**How to stop exotics:** Get to know the common exotic threats. Inform friends and neighbors. If you see these offered for sale, explain the problem to your nursery, grower or supplier. If you find any on your property, inform the Weed Control Authority. Support national, state and local efforts of early detection and rapid response to newly found invasive plants.

### Some invasive plants to watch out for:

- Known invasive plants well established in the county**
- Musk thistle, *carduus nutans* L.\*
  - Leafy spurge, *euphorbia esula*\*

Plumeless thistle, *carduus acanthoides*\*

Canada thistle, *cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.\*

### Known invasive plants with increasing populations in the county

Purple loosestrife, *cythrum salicaria*

**Sericea lespedeza, cespedeza cuneata**

**Description:** A warm season, perennial herb in the pea family, or Fabaceae. It has an erect growth form, ranging from 3 to 5 1/2 feet in height and



leaves that alternate along the stem. Each leaf is divided into three smaller leaflets, 1/2 to 1 inch long, which are narrowly oblong and pointed, with awl-shaped spines. Leaflets are covered with densely flattened hairs, giving a grayish-green or silvery appearance. Mature stems are somewhat woody and fibrous with sharp, stiff, flattened bristles. Violet to purple flowers emerge either singly or in clusters of 2 to 4, from the axils of the upper and median leaves.

**Ecological threat:** *Sericea lespedeza*, is primarily a threat to open areas such as meadows, prairies, open woodlands, wetland borders and fields. Once it gains a foothold, it can crowd out native plants and develop an extensive seed bank in the soil, ensuring its long residence at a site. Established dense stands of *lespedeza* suppress native flora and its high tannin content makes it unpalatable to native wildlife as well as livestock.

**Johnsongrass, sorghum halepense** (L.) Pers.

**Description:** Johnsongrass is a perennial species over most of its range. Leaves are grass-like, up to one inch wide, with a prominent whitish midvein. The



ligule is short and membranous with a hairy fringe; auricles are lacking. Stems can grow up to eight feet in height, but our annual specimens will be closer to three or four feet tall. Large, open panicles are up to one foot long and emerge in midsummer. Spikelets are reddish in color and most are tipped by bent awns. Scaly, finger-thick rhizomes are produced from the crown.

**Ecological threat:** Johnsongrass is an invasive grass that forms dense spreading patches that completely smother other

grasses. Like all sorghums, Johnsongrass can be toxic to livestock, especially during adverse growing conditions or periods of new growth. This grass is extremely difficult to control and can become a major problem in pasture and cropping areas.

Known invasive plants with few or no plants found in the county

### Spotted and Diffuse Knapweeds, centaurea sp.\*

**Description:** Each plant produces up to 25,000 seeds that are dispersed by wind, animals and people. Seeds may remain viable for eight years. Spotted knapweed is a biennial or short-



lived perennial. Mature plants may be three feet in height and are much branched. The weed forms a basal rosette the first year and stem leaves are pinnately divided. Flower heads are abundant, 1/2 inch wide and generally solitary on branch tips. Flowers are pink to purple, or occasionally white and appear from midsummer to fall. Each stiff flower head bract has a dark comb-like fringe resembling a black spot at the tip. Seeds are dark brown to tan and are tipped by plumes that fall off at maturity.

### Eurasian watermilfoil, myriophyllum spicatum L.

**Description:** The exotic Eurasian watermilfoil is submersed. It tolerates a wide range



of water conditions and often forms large infestations. Eurasian watermilfoil stems are reddish-brown to whitish-pink. They are branched and commonly grow to lengths of six to nine feet. The leaves are deeply divided, soft and feather-like. Leaves are about two inches long. The leaves are arranged in whorls of three to six leaves about the stem. The flowers of Eurasian watermilfoil are reddish and very small. They are held above the water on an emersed flower spike that is several inches long.

**Ecological threat:** Eurasian watermilfoil can form large, floating mats of vegetation on the surface of lakes, rivers and other water bodies, preventing light penetration for native aquatic plants and impeding water traffic. The plant thrives in areas that have been subjected to various kinds of natural and manmade disturbance.

\*Designated noxious weeds in Nebraska