

Weed Awareness

Learn to Recognize Nebraska's Noxious Weeds

The Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act states it is the duty of each person who owns or controls land to effectively control noxious weeds on such land. Pictured are Nebraska's noxious weeds which can be found in Lancaster County.*



Musk Thistle
(579 reported infestations in 2004)



Purple Loosestrife
(251 reported infestations in 2004)



Leafy Spurge
(234 reported infestations in 2004)



Plumeless Thistle
(5 reported infestations in 2004)



Canada Thistle
(3 reported infestations in 2004)



Saltcedar
(2 known infestations in 2004)

Noxious weed is a legal term used to denote a destructive or harmful weed for the purpose of regulation. The Director of Agriculture establishes which plants are noxious. These non-native plants compete aggressively with desirable plants and vegetation. Failure to control noxious weeds in this state is a serious problem which is detrimental to the production of crops and livestock and to the welfare of residents of this state. Noxious weeds may also devalue land and reduce tax revenue.

**Nebraska's noxious weeds Spotted and Diffuse Knapweeds have not be found in Lancaster County*

Saltcedar Added to Nebraska's Noxious Weed List

In order to protect Nebraska's economy and the quality of its land, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Merlyn Carlson found it necessary to designate saltcedar as a noxious weed in Nebraska. The designation took effect on January 1, 2005.

Saltcedar is a dense, deciduous shrub or small tree that has the potential to significantly affect native vegetation throughout much of Nebraska. A native of Eurasia and north Africa, it was introduced into the United States as an ornamental.

Ornamental Plantings

Saltcedar has been sold for many years as various tamarisk species, also called tamarix. Seeds of 'Pink Cascade' and other selections of Tamarix can escape to waterways in the state. It is no longer legal to sell the seeds or plants of tamarix in Nebraska since it was designated a noxious weed. Existing plantings are also considered illegal and need to be removed.

Identification

Saltcedar is a deciduous tree (or shrub) with long slender branches and deep pink



Saltcedar, or tamarisk

flowers. It grows to 6–26 feet tall. The branches often form thickets many feet wide. The narrow leaves are small and grayish green, often overlapping and crowding on the stems. Although the leaves have the appearance of an evergreen, they are actually deciduous.

The deep pink to almost white flowers crowd in many slender spikes, forming dense masses at the top of the branches. The flowers are about 1.5mm across, and have

five petals. The seedpods are pinkish red to greenish yellow and will break into three to five parts when mature. A tuft of fine silky hairs adorns the tip of the tiny seeds.

The saltcedar's bark is a reddish brown while the wood is soft and white. The smooth bark ridges and furrows with age. Tamarix have a deep taproot and extensive lateral rhizomes, which profusely branch upon contact with water.

Detrimental Impacts

Saltcedar has invaded riparian areas throughout the West. As an aggressive colonizer able to survive in a wide variety of habitats, saltcedar often forms monotypic stands, replacing willows, cottonwoods and other native riparian vegetation.

The stems and leaves of mature plants secrete salt, forming a crust above and below ground that inhibits other plants. Saltcedar has a long taproot that allows it to access deep water tables and interfere with natural aquatic systems.

Saltcedar is an enormous water consumer. A single large plant can absorb 200 gallons of water a day. Saltcedar's high water consumption further

stresses native vegetation by lowering ground water levels and can also dry up springs and marshy areas.

Infestations also have detrimental impacts on wildlife. Saltcedar seeds have almost no protein and are too small to be eaten by most animals. In addition, its scale-like leaves offer little suitable forage for browsing animals. Studies indicate saltcedar is not favored bird habitat.

A single mature saltcedar may produce hundreds of thousands of seeds between April and October. The seeds are then dispersed by wind and water throughout the growing season. The seedlings are tolerant of water, saline soils and drought and may grow as much as a foot a month.

What makes non-native invasive plants such as saltcedar different from other introduced species is their ability to take advantage of disturbances to the native plant community to expand their limits. Once established, non-native invasive plants can spread rapidly because of the lack of natural enemies that keep plant populations balanced in their native range.

Foothold in Nebraska

Saltcedar has been documented throughout Nebraska. Infestations have been found along the Platte River from

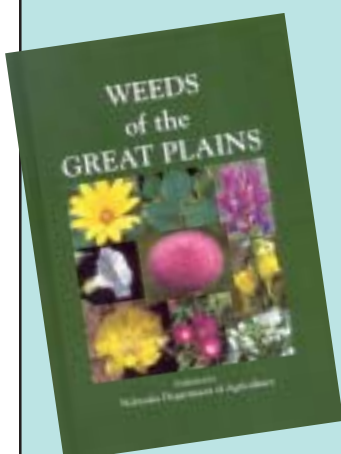
Wyoming to the Missouri River. Also, saltcedar is found along many of Nebraska's southwest reservoirs as well as Lake McConaughy. Smaller infestations have been found on the Republican and Missouri Rivers.

Only two infestations are known in Lancaster County. Undoubtedly this number will increase as more monitoring is done and the public becomes more aware. A few ornamental plantings have been observed in Lincoln. Any sightings of saltcedar (ornamental or wild) should be reported to the Weed Control Authority at 441-7817.

Removal of Ornamental Plantings

The most effective control method is cutting down the shrub or tree and painting the stump surface immediately afterward with an herbicide (cut stump treatment). Herbicide must be applied within 10–15 minutes of cutting to prevent excessive resprouting from the stump. Follow up herbicide application is needed to treat sprouts from the root system. This usually will only be necessary for 2–4 years. All branches and trunk pieces must be removed from the site to prevent sprouting. Tamarisk branches touching wet ground have been known to sprout and send down new roots.

Nebraska Weed Resources



Weeds of the Great Plains — this hardbound book is a collaborative effort between the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. It helps farmers, ranchers and homeowners, as well as the more technical expectations of botanists, to accurately identify weeds and common plants in the great plains. The price of this book is \$25 — credit card orders may be placed by calling 471-2394. The book may be purchased at the Department of Agriculture's Lincoln office, 301 Centennial Mall South, for a cost of \$22.50.

2005 Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska — this 168-page University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension publication (EC04-130-D) is available online at <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/fieldcrops/ec130.htm> or may be purchased for \$3 at the Lancaster County Cooperative Extension office. The guide deals principally with herbicides as an aid for crop protection. This year's additions and improvements include a section on nonchemical weed control and "Noxious Weeds" has its own section.

