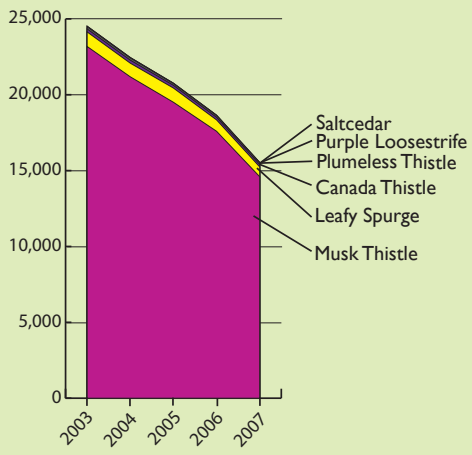
Weed Awareness

Decline in Noxious Weeds

In Lancaster County, there has been an overall decline in the state-designated noxious weeds due to the efforts of landowners. There are other weeds of concern with the potential to be designated as noxious weeds by the state or county.

Acres of Noxious Weeds



Musk Thistle—The acres of musk thistle infestations continue to decline. There are fewer infestations found and the infestations are getting smaller. Most landowners have learned to look for infestations where they were the previous year and apply herbicides with residual control while the musk thistle is still in the rosette stage of growth – April, May. They re-inspect every two weeks the infested areas and spot treat any escapes and any spring germinating plants. Those with the most effective control programs, will also take steps to inhibit germination of new plants, spread of infestations to new areas and initiate their control efforts of the fall germinating seedlings and rosettes.

Leafy Spurge—Leafy spurge infestations are also declining. Leafy spurge being a deep-rooted perennial plant takes even more persistent and long term effort to keep infestations under control and to reduce the size of the infestations.

Purple Loosestrife—The reduction of purple loosestrife has been the most dramatic. The over 2,000 sites planted with ornamental purple loosestrife have been eliminated by cooperative homeowners. Thanks go to the cooperating garden centers that gave discounts for the replacement plants. There are about 40 wild infestations of purple loosestrife in drainage ways in and around Lincoln that need continued follow-up control to prevent the infestations reaching Salt Creek proper.

Other Noxious Weeds—There is some plumeless thistle in the eastern part of the county intermingled with musk thistle and is controlled along with the musk thistle. There are also several small infestations of Canada thistle throughout the county. Many of these infestations in Lincoln are brought in with tree and shrub plantings or lawn sod in the past. These infestations are very persistent but are only spreading underground roots and not by seed. Saltcedar has been found in the wild at four locations and four individual trees planted as ornamentals were also located. All of these have been controlled.

There needs to be a continued alert for the diffuse knapweeds, state designated noxious weeds not found in the county and phragmites, serecea lespedeza and other potential noxious weeds.

Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force Created in 2007

Legislative Bill 701 passed by the Nebraska Unicameral on April 26, 2007, and signed into law by Governor Dave Heineman on May 1, 2007, created the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force. This task force was created in response to the many concerns and threats to Nebraska's riparian areas. Many of the streams are being clogged with vegetation and other obstructions and the vegetation in areas adjacent to the streams are being replaced by invading plants. This is creating a multitude of impacts.

Stream capacities are being reduced dramatically which will increase flood damage potential and is affecting the required delivery of water to Kansas. The invading plants are affecting wildlife and endangered species habitat. It is the job of the task force to address concerns and threats.

The task force was to develop and prioritize vegetation management goals and objectives; analyze the cost-effectiveness of available vegetation treatment; and develop plans and policies to achieve such goals and objectives. The legislation requires the task force to make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by Dec. 15, 2007, and June 30, 2008 and 2009, regarding funding and legislation needed to achieve its goals.

Governor Dave Heineman appointed task force members on June 21, 2007. The task force members include surface water project representatives, representatives from eight state entities, representatives from NRD's, representatives from the Nebraska Weed Control Association, riparian landowners and five state senators.

Lancaster County Weed Control Authority Superintendent Russell Shultz was appointed to the task force as one of the Nebraska Weed Control Association representatives. He is serving as vice chair of the task force.

The task force has met three times and had two field tours. Minutes from the three task force meetings can be found at www.agr.ne.gov under the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force button. This Web site includes other important information regarding task force activities.

Seven work groups were created to aid the task force in identifying, and then framing, issues critical to meeting goals and objectives. It was determined groups could solicit information, and include in discussions, experts who are not task force members.

The groups created are:

- Task Force Goals, Objectives and Reports
- Vegetative Management and Treatment
- Survey and Monitoring
- Education and Awareness
- Funding and Incentive Program
- Streambed Ownership
- Vegetation Water Use

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is administratively responsible for the task force. If you have any comments or desire to provide input into this process hit the contact NDA button at the top of the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force. The first report has been completed and can be viewed at above identified URL.

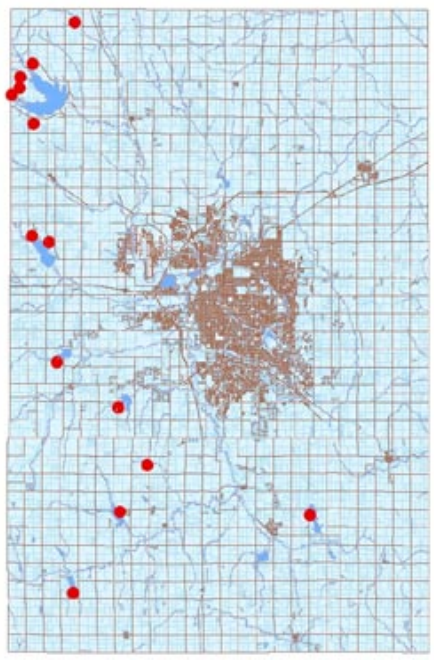
Be on the Look Out for Sericea Lespedeza

Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*), or Chinese bush clover, is an introduced perennial legume native to eastern Asia. It is recognized for its tolerance of drought, acidity and shallow soils of low fertility. It will tolerate soils ranging from very acidic to slightly alkaline, but is best adapted to a pH of 6.0 to 6.5. It does best on clay and loamy soils deep, fertile and well-drained, but will also grow on poor sites. It has few insect and disease problems. Sericea lespedeza's ability to thrive under a variety of conditions and its tendency to crowd out more palatable forages, are among the reasons it has been declared a noxious weed in Kansas and may be considered a noxious weed in Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. Both Gage and Pawnee Counties in Nebraska have designated sericea lespedeza as a county noxious weed.

Sericea was planted in the past to control soil erosion, provide forage for livestock and provide cover and food for wildlife. In Lancaster County, it was planted in wildlife areas. Sericea lespedeza was originally considered valuable as food and cover for wildlife. This has not been supported by research or practical experience. From these plantings, it has spread by animals and movement of hay contaminated with sericea seed to native prairies, shrublands, forests and pastures. Normal management practices such as grazing, burning and applying herbicides do not adequately control sericea lespedeza.

Current Status in Lancaster County

Sericea lespedeza has been identified in 14 sites in Lancaster County as shown on the map. Most of these sites are on wildlife lands. Wildlife managers are currently addressing sericea lespedeza on these lands. Private landowners need to be aware and control any infestations spreading to their property. It is likely to show up along road ditches and grasslands. It seems to invade native grasslands more than introduced grasses. Special attention should be made of CRP lands. We have not found infestations on CRP lands, but infestations are being found in many Kansas CRP plantings. Efforts are under way to identify infestations and conduct an aggressive public awareness campaign. Please let the Weed Control Authority office of sightings you feel may be sericea lespedeza. It can be found easier in the fall when the grass starts to brown up while sericea is still green and actively growing.



Sericea Lespedeza sites in Lancaster County in 2007

Identifying Sericea Lespedeza

Sericea lespedeza is a shrubby, deciduous perennial about two- to five-feet tall. Coarse stems are single or clustered with numerous branches. New growth each year comes from buds located on the stem bases or crown about one- to three-inches below the ground. Stems and branches are densely leaved. Leaves are trifoliate and attached by short petioles. Leaves are club- or wedge-shaped (wider at the tip than the base) 1/4- to one-inch long and 1/16

to 1/4-inch wide. The leaf is round to flat at the top, with a conspicuous point at the tip. The lower leaf surface has silky hairs. Scale-like stipules are present on the stem.

Flowers are yellowish-white with purple to pink markings and appear from mid-July to early October. The flowers occur in clusters of one to three in the upper leaf axils and are 1/4-inch long, fused at the base.

Sericea may be confused with desirable native legumes. Several species of lespedeza occur in the Midwest. Native perennial lespedezas in the Midwest include roundhead, violet and slender lespedeza. None of these species has shown the invasive nature of sericea lespedeza. Slender lespedeza is the easiest to confuse with sericea lespedeza. Slender lespedeza has the same tall, coarse, branched stems as sericea lespedeza but has different-colored flowers and a different leaf shape. Flower color of slender lespedeza ranges from purple to pink, and the leaves are linear or elliptical with a rounded tip (without a conspicuous point) and base.

Sericea Lespedeza Information

Sericea lespedeza information including control recommendations can be found at the Multi-State Sericea Lespedeza Work Group Web site www.oznet.ksu.edu/sericea