



## INVASIVE WEEDS: WHY DO WE CARE?

Invasive, or noxious, weeds have multiple impacts on our environment, agriculture, and recreation. They are capable of out competing existing vegetation, spreading rapidly and becoming the only plant species growing in an area.

These weed species of concern are generally not native to this area, and as they become established they crowd out the native vegetation. The primary reason they are extremely competitive with native plant species is that they are not only well adapted to our climate, but they also left behind natural predators, such as insects, diseases, and native animals, that evolved with them in their original habitats. This proliferation of weeds reduces the biodiversity of the area, decreasing its value as wildlife habitat, as the weed dominated plant community will not provide the food and cover that the native plant community will. For example, in riparian areas purple loosestrife can out compete cattails, eliminating habitat for both mammals and birds. There are also situations where soil stability, water quantity and water quality are negatively effected when native plants with fibrous root systems are replaced by weed species with deep tap roots.

Invasive, or noxious, weeds can drastically reduce crop production by competing for space, water and nutrients with agricultural crops and livestock forage species. Even 15 years ago it was estimated that the United States lost over \$7 billion in annual crop yield due to noxious weeds. These weeds also out compete forage plants which could be utilized by livestock. Examples are readily apparent in the foothills where, by mid-summer, large acreages are unusable by grazing animals due to the proliferation of yellow starthistle.

Recreational values are also threatened by these weeds. They can invade areas used to dock boats, picnic, or camp adversely affecting boating and fishing values. Thistles and nettles can occupy nature trails traversed by campers, hikers and bikers. These weeds can spread throughout native plant communities in wilderness areas, detracting from the wilderness experience. They also often out compete native wildflowers, eliminating the aesthetic enjoyment of many areas.

On the following page is just a sample of the numerous noxious weeds found in El Dorado County and the central Sierra Nevada. Photos and descriptions of these weeds can be found in *Selected Invasive Weeds of the Central Sierra Nevada* produced by the El Dorado County Noxious Weed Management Group.



## Some of the Invasive (Noxious) Weeds Found in El Dorado County

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>
Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>
Bull thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Canada thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Dalmatian toadflax	<i>Linaria genistifolia ssp. dalmatica</i>
Diffuse knapweed	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>
English ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
Giant reed	<i>Arundo donax</i>
Goatgrass	<i>Aegilops triuncialis</i>
Italian thistle	<i>Carduus pycnocephalus</i>
Johnsongrass	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>
Klamathweed	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>
Lens-podded whitetop	<i>Cardaria chaelpensis</i>
Medusahead	<i>Taeniatherum caput-medusae</i>
Milk thistle	<i>Silybum marianum</i>
Oblong spurge	<i>Euphorbia oblongata</i>
Pampasgrass	<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>
Perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop)	<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>

Poison hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>
Puncture vine	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>
Purple loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
Rush skeletonweed	<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>
Scotch, French, and Spanish Brooms	<i>Cystisus scoparius</i>
	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
	<i>Spartium junceum</i>
Spiny sowthistle	<i>Sonchus asper</i>
Spotted knapweed	<i>Centaurea maculosa</i>
Yellow starthistle	<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>