

Supplementary Weed Control Information

Invasive Species, or Weed?

Ecologists define weeds as plants that live in disturbed areas. Gardeners define weeds as unwanted plants. For many weeds, both definitions are true.

Invasive species are more nefarious. These plants can invade natural areas and multiply rapidly. They can destroy native plant communities and the animals that depend on them. But how do you know which plants are just weeds and which are more hazardous?

Invasive Species Advisory System

We have developed a qualitative rating system to give an idea of just how hazardous various invasive species are. The higher the rating, the more troublesome the weed. If a species is hazardous to people (such as poison ivy or deadly nightshade), they are placed into a category higher than they would otherwise be in.

-5 Highly Invasive: These are the worst of the worst. They can quickly invade and virtually destroy a natural community. They should not be allowed to persist on any property.

-4 Exotic Invasive: These invasive species are slightly slower invaders or are easier to control than the "Highly Invasive" species. But in time and the right site conditions they can cause a great deal of damage.

-3 Aggressive Weed: Though they cannot invade pristine natural areas they can cause problems in disturbed areas, and should be managed.

-2 Persistent Weed: These plants can live for a long period of time in an area, retarding the stabilization of the community by competing with desirable plants. Some weedy natives are included here.

-1 Minor Pest: These weeds, mostly annuals, are only a problem in lawns, agricultural lands, vegetable gardens or other disturbed or low diversity sites.

Managing Aggressive Weeds

It is far easier to manage invasive species early in the invasion before the population grows too large. If the species on the other side of this sheet is found on your property it would be wise to eliminate it as soon as possible. Unfortunately we often don't notice invasive species until they are already a serious problem.

In order to subdue a colony of invasive plants you need to hit them hard, but also intelligently. For example, you may not be able to kill every annual or biennial weed you are fighting, but if you can prevent them from producing seed, you can prevent them from producing the next generation. In general, controlling invasive species takes tenacity and persistence. It may seem overwhelming at times, but it is not an impossible task. You can do it!

Herbicide Application

At Good Oak, we avoid using herbicides as much as possible to help protect the environment. However if you consider the ecological damage invasive plants can cause, herbicides can be a less destructive option. Some weeds are just too tenacious to be effectively killed by other methods. Often, herbicides allow us to save vast amounts of labor. So you can indeed do more good than harm with herbicides if you use them properly.

The first, and most important rule to using herbicides safely is to always read the product label for the herbicide carefully, use them only as directed and follow safety recommendations listed there.

Foliar applications: Spray only enough chemical to cover the leaf surface you are spraying, and not so much that it drips off the target plant onto surrounding vegetation. For basal bark treatments only spray or paint enough herbicide to wet the surface, do not apply excess amounts that run down the trunk to the ground.

Cut Stump: For cut stump treatments of shrubs, remember that only the thin outer ring of cambium on the stump needs to be treated, for the heartwood is not alive. Spraying the center of large stumps only wastes herbicide.

Additional Resources

There are many sources of additional information about invasive species. You could simply do an internet search using the common name, or preferably the scientific name of the noxious weed you are interested in along with keywords such as "invasive" or "control". For most species there will be plenty of hits to help you confirm the identity of the plant in question and offer additional information about control. There are also many books and websites which are great sources of information. Here is a list of some of the best:

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to Their Identification and Control
by Elizabeth J. Czarapata

Weeds of the Northern U. S. and Canada
by Frances Royer & Richard Dickinson

PCA's "Least Wanted" List: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact.htm>

WDNR's Invasive Species: Plants:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/>

INHS's Vegetation management Guideline:
<http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/VMG.html>

For more Weed ID Sheets see:

www.goodoak.com/info/weeds/