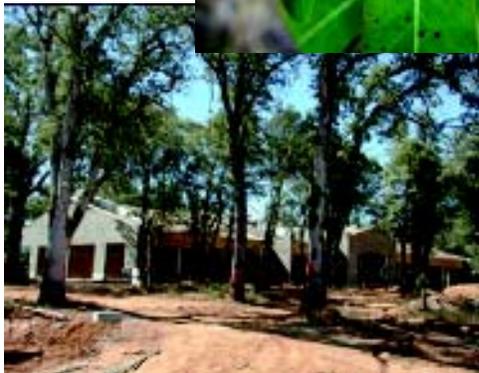


A Landowner's Guide to Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Weeds

What Every Homeowner and Landowner Needs to Know About Invasive Weeds



Hoary cress (above) and Oblong spurge (right).



Invasive weeds are damaging our pastures, roads, parks, forests and natural areas. Homeowners and landowners, gardeners, landscapers and contractors can play a critical role in stopping their introduction and spread during site-disturbing construction and maintenance activities. By following a few simple prevention guidelines, you can significantly decrease the spread of invasive weeds on your property.

The most effective, economical, and ecologically sound method of managing invasive plants is to prevent their invasion in the first place. Too often, landowners pour money into fighting weeds after they are firmly established. In such cases, control is extremely

expensive and eradication is often no longer feasible. Resources can be spent more efficiently on proactive weed management activities that focus on prevention of new invasions.

Invasive weed seeds and root fragments can be moved to a parcel on equipment or tires, in gravel or fill materials, or in erosion control materials and mulch. Seeds or root fragments can then reproduce, especially where soil has been disturbed. The best defenses against invasive weeds are prevention of introductions and early detection and eradication, before new infestations get established.



Spotted knapweed.

Understanding the Problem...

Invasive plants, otherwise known as invasive weeds, are a serious problem in California and are causing millions of dollars in damages annually. Invasive weeds are characteristically non-native, adaptable, aggressive plants that can reproduce quickly and abundantly. Plants like yellow starthistle, spotted

knapweed, Scotch broom and tree-of-heaven are crowding out native plants and reducing the productivity of range, timber and farmlands. Invasive weeds change the structure of soil, alter water flows and conditions, reduce the food and shelter available for wildlife, restrict visibility and create hazards on our roadsides, decrease

property values and interfere with outdoor recreation. Human and animal health can also be harmed by invasive weeds.

Thousands of plant species have been brought to North America in the past three centuries. Most are well-behaved, rarely invading natural and agricultural

areas. A few, however, do not have the natural enemies from their native homelands to keep them in check, allowing them to out-compete our native plants and farm crops.

Best Management Guidelines for Landowners During Site-Disturbing Projects



Consider following these guidelines whenever site-disturbing activities are planned for your property. These projects can include: road construction and maintenance, new building or septic system sites, landscaping and fire fuel-load reduction and defensible space projects. By following the guidelines listed below, you can significantly decrease the introduction and spread of invasive weeds on your property:

- Learn which plants are considered invasive in your area; inventory your property and mark any infested areas.
- If invasive weeds are present, treat them before disturbing the soil, ideally for 3 to 5 years prior to the start of the project.
- Avoid creating conditions that promote weed germination and establishment:
 - Minimize soil disturbance.
 - Retain shade to the extent possible to suppress weeds.
 - Retain native vegetation and topsoil as much as possible.
- Require all equipment to be cleaned before arriving on your property and inspected for weed seeds and plant parts.
- Mark off known infestations and request equipment operators to work in these areas last.
- When practical, salvage weed-seed-free topsoil and replace it on disturbed areas; healthy topsoil will enhance revegetation.
- Request weed-free materials (fill, gravel, sand, mulch, straw, etc.) from suppliers.
- Re-establishment of vegetation by seeding or planting can discourage weed growth:
 - Use local seeding guidelines and certified weed-free seed mixes.

- Consider chipping local brush for mulch – an added benefit is that mature seeds in the brush can help restore localized vegetation on the site.
- Use certified weed-free hay or straw.
- Ask for only non-invasive plants when purchasing plants for landscaping.
- Inspect all ground-disturbing projects for at least three growing seasons following completion of the project. Weed management is a long-term process. Weed seeds often last 5 to 50 years in the soil and pieces of root as small as ½” can start a new plant and a new infestation. Plan for follow-up treatments if weeds are detected.
- Encourage your landowners’ association to prevent weed problems through education and awareness.
- Let your neighbors know about the impacts caused by weeds, including the effects on property values.



Diffuse Knapweed.

Published by the El Dorado County Invasive Weed Management Group

Funded by the California Department of Food and Agriculture - Weed Management Area Grant

Compiled by Wendy West, University of California Cooperative Extension

For more information about invasive weeds or the El Dorado County Invasive Weeds Management Group contact UCCE (530) 621-5502 or <http://ucanr.org/edc> invasive weeds or the El Dorado County Department of Agriculture (530) 621-5520.

Photos courtesy of El Dorado County Photo Library, Sue Donaldson, Bob Case and Mark Egbert.

References:

Selected Invasive Weeds of the Central Sierra Nevada - A Field Guide

<http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/files/40826.pdf>

“Measures to Prevent the Spread of Noxious and Invasive Weeds during Construction Activities” – University of Reno Cooperative Extension, Fact Sheet FS-03-59 at:

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/FS03/FS0359.pdf>

“Invasive Plant Prevention Guidelines” – Center for Invasive Plant Management September 2003 – available for purchase at:

http://www.weedcenter.org/products_pub/prod_pub_new.html

“Best Management Practices for Land Managers” published by Long Island Weed Management Area, available at:

<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/products/wma/li-managers.pdf>