

NOXIOUS, NOT NUISANCE...

Environmental Division
Tina Travis
El Paso County
Community Services Department



What is a Noxious Weed?

Colorado Noxious Weed Act (Title 35, Article 5.5)

Gives responsibility and authority to manage noxious weeds on public and private property

A noxious weed is:

- A non-native (alien) plant
 - Aggressive invader
 - Is poisonous to wildlife and livestock
 - Is a carrier of harmful or damaging insects, diseases or parasites
 - Presence of this plant has a negative impact on the management of natural or agricultural ecosystems.
-

Thistles



Musk



Canada



Why should you care?



Wavyleaf thistle

The good and the bad...

- Colorado-15 species of native thistle / 5 non-native (Noxious weeds)
- Many birds and pollinators prefer native thistles over other plants
 - Provide nectar and pollen
 - Seed source for birds
 - Nesting supplies and food for finches
- Native thistles add beauty and diversity to native plant communities
- Native thistles often pulled, mowed, clipped or sprayed indiscriminately
- Elimination of all thistles causes ecosystem damage
- Native thistles have lost habitat from failure to distinguish them from invasive species
- Take the time to identify thistles before eradicating them. Native thistles provide much needed variety in our ecosystems. If native thistles are eradicated, we create an environment more susceptible to invasion by nonnative plants.



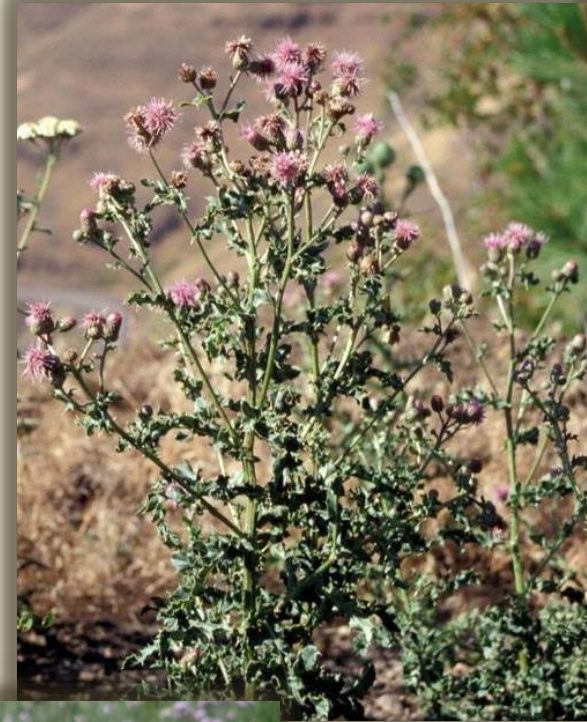
Platte thistle

Canada thistle (perennial)

- Very aggressive
- Flowering time, June through Fall
- Reproduces by seed and rhizomes
- Stems smooth
- Up to 4 feet
- Forms large patches



14 months growth



Mowing, pulling and goat grazing are only temporarily effective.

Scotch thistle

- Biennial
- Very aggressive
- Large flowers
- Flowering time, June through August
- Stems have spiny wings
- Up to 10 feet tall



Musk thistle



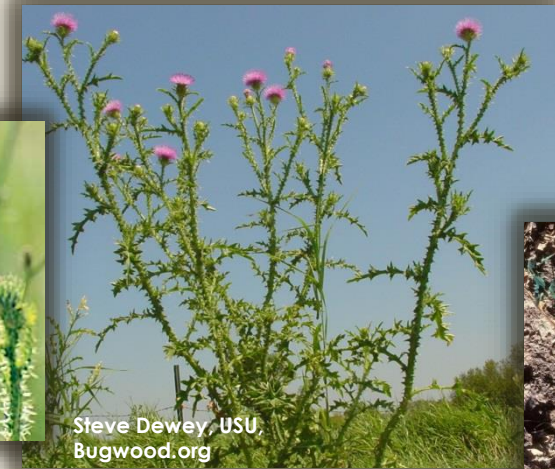
Bull thistle



Plumeless thistle



BC Ag

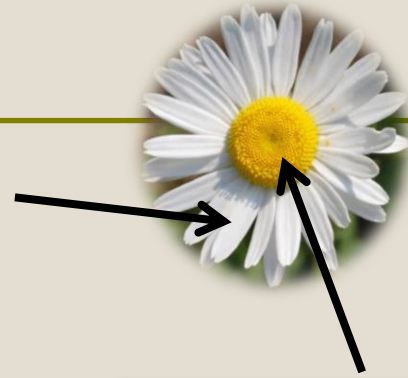


Steve Dewey, USU
Bugwood.org



Spotted knapweed

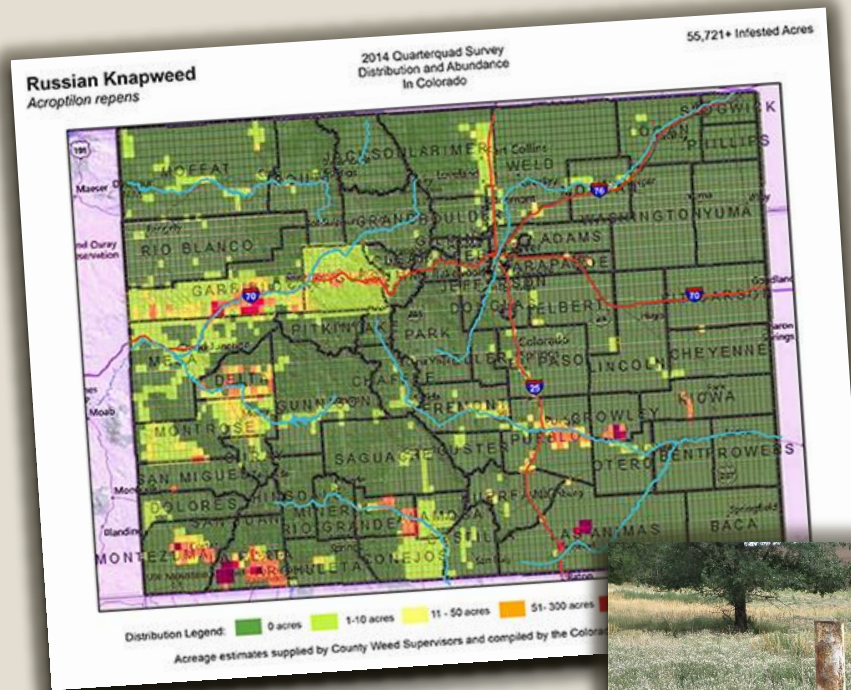
- Short lived perennial
- Bracts, dark tipped, fringed
- Purple-pink flowers
- Reproduces by seed (40,000)
- Leaves opposite
- Up to 4 feet



- Biennial
- Taproot
- Single stem
- Bracts, fringed, terminal sharp spine
- White flowers
- Reproduces by seed (1,200+)

Diffuse knapweed

Russian knapweed



- Perennial
- Papery bracts
- Purple-pink flowers
- Reproduces root and seed
- Root system vigorous, creeping
- Leaves alternate
- Very aggressive
- Toxic to horses

Knapweed Infestation



Eric Coombs, Oregon Dept. of Ag., Bugwood.org



George Beck, CSU, Bugwood.org

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Leafy spurge

- Perennial
- Yellow flower like bracts
- Milky sap
- Semi-woody stems

-Contains a sap that causes blisters in the mouths of cattle and wildlife.

-Can reduce cattle carrying capacity of rangeland or pastures by 50 to 75 %. CSU Ext Fact Sheet #3.107



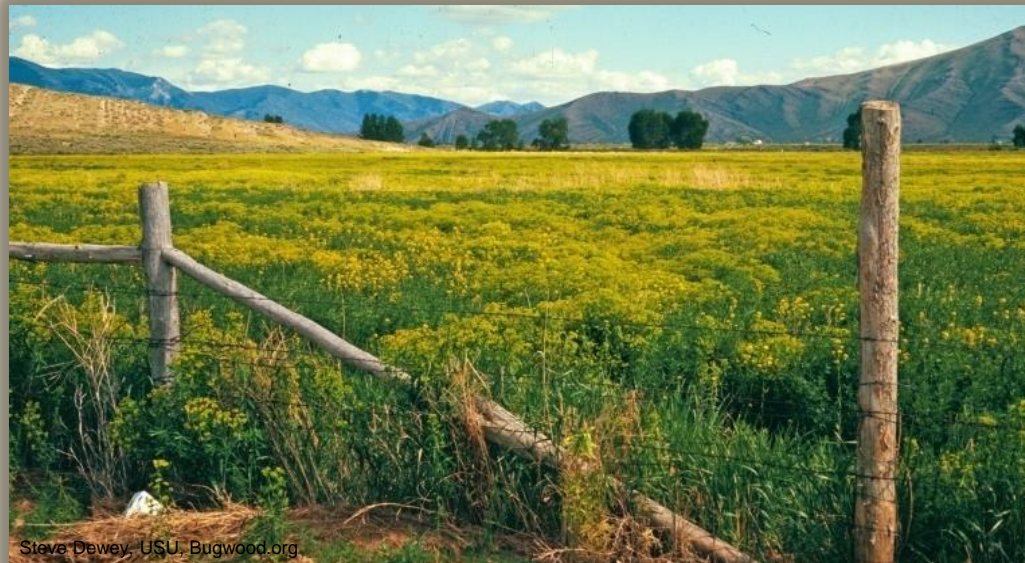
Steve Dewey, USU, Bugwood.org



George Markham, USFS, Bugwood.org



Norman E. Rees, USDA ARS, Bugwood.org



Steve Dewey, USU, Bugwood.org



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Why should you care?



All parts of this plant are considered toxic. Anyone coming in contact with the plant should be wearing eye protection and gloves, and should expose as little skin as possible for risk of irritation.



Steve Dewey, USU, Bugwood.org

Toadflax's

(Yellow and Dalmatian)

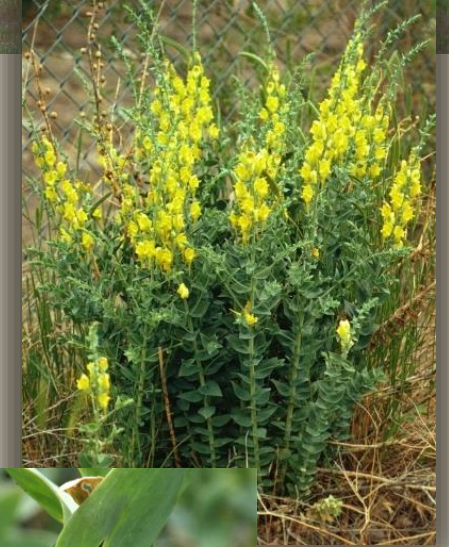


“Butter and Eggs”



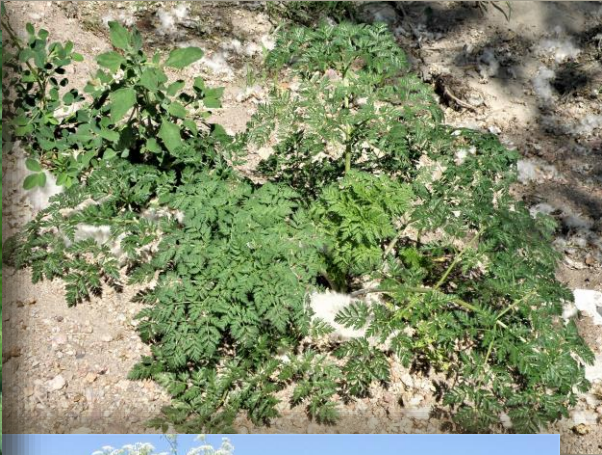
Michael Shephard, USDA, Bugwood.org

- Perennial forb
- Yellow snap-dragon like flowers
- Reproduces by seed and rhizomes
- Leaves alternate
- Toxic to livestock, unpalatable, will typically avoid
- Root buds produce plants which become independent within a year.
- Dalmatian-500,000 seeds, viable 10 years
- Yellow-30,000 seeds, viable 10 years



Hemlock

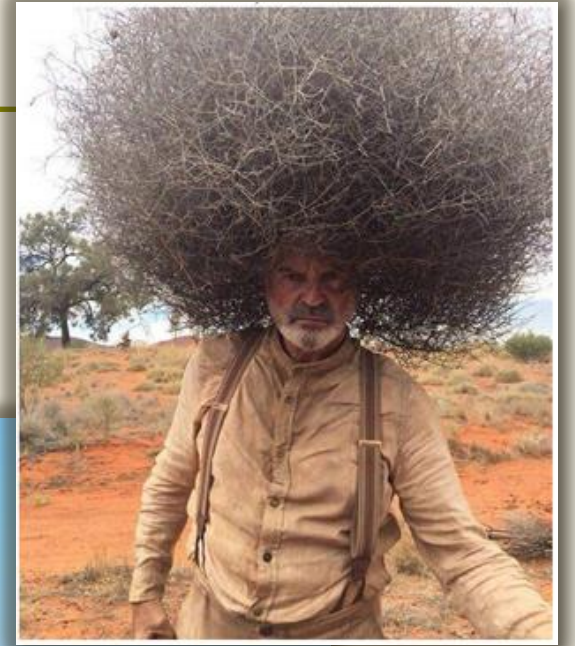
Poison



Water



Meanwhile, in Colorado...



Gardening Rule:

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.



Not sure if you've found a noxious weed? Don't worry! Take a photo and send to tinatravis@elpasoco.com or mail it to: El Paso County Environmental Division, 3255 Akers Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80922. And feel free to call at 719-520-7839!