



# BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

1500 Hwy 2, Suite 101 • Sandpoint, ID 83864 • Phone: (208) 255-5681 ext.6  
<https://www.bonnercountyid.gov/noxious-weeds>

## Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Weeds Manager*

Idaho is thought to have 12 seasons—winter, fool’s spring, second winter, spring of deception, third winter, mud season, actual spring, summer, Hell’s front porch, false fall, second summer (1 week) and actual fall. I estimate that we are somewhere between spring of deception and third winter. Last “spring” felt perpetually stuck in third winter and I think I’m scarred for life because of it. Hoping nature has better plans this year!

An integrated approach to weed control consists of utilizing multiple tools in the toolbox; mechanical, cultural, chemical and biological control methods built on the pillar of prevention. Prevention is the first line of defense against invasive weed infestations. Some prevention methods include washing equipment between sites, scrubbing footwear after hiking and using weed free products to the extent possible. I generally advise against using wildflower mixes, and recommend opting for individual seed packets instead. You can empty the contents of an individual flower packet onto a paper plate and cull out any seeds that appear non-uniform as potential contaminants. If a variety mix is a must, try to seek out options that have some kind of language indicating that no noxious weed seeds were found. By no means does that guarantee noxious weed free seed, but at least you know the source did their due diligence to mitigate the risk.

Something else to watch for is contaminated bird seed. Feeding song birds is fun, especially through the winter months—I partake in it. Just keep an eye out under the feeders for any new plants that seem out of place as we progress through spring. A common bird feed contaminant is **Buffalobur** (*Solanum rostratum*), an Idaho state listed noxious weed. Buffalobur is the only one of its kind on the Idaho noxious weed list, being that it’s actually native to the United States. I went over how a weed lands (or fails to land) on the noxious weed list in my previous article. I suspect that the Idaho Wool Growers Association may have been a force behind the listing, being that the bur-like fruiting bodies get caught in sheep wool, devaluing the product. Buffalobur is also a host for the Colorado Potato Beetle—an obvious threat for economic loss in Idaho.



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Buffalobur is an annual, and grows to heights of about 2 feet tall with leaves that are hairy and deeply lobed, almost to the midvein. Flowers are bright yellow and measure about 1 inch wide. The fruiting bodies develop into seeds with Velcro-like qualities. The entire specimen with the exception of the flower petals is covered with spines that range from  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in length. Being native to this part of the world, there are indigenous bugs and diseases that serve as mitigating factors, so it is not highly competitive the way weeds from Eurasia typically are. With that, eradication is more tenable. Buffalobur does not have a confirmed presence in Bonner County, so it would be an EDRR (early detection, rapid response) if it shows up. Being that it's on the Idaho noxious weed list, it comes with obligations to control. Monitor areas under those bird feeders—this is a specimen that can usually be identified early in the lifecycle due to its unique features (having deeply lobed leaves with spines). The sooner an annual can be addressed, the better. Dig them up and discard, or use a broadleaf herbicide appropriate for the use site. If you source hay or gravel from outside of Bonner County that happens to be contaminated with Buffalobur, it could result in a larger infestation than what you would end up with from contaminated bird feed. If that's the situation, get in contact with me for confirmation if you tentatively identify it. As an EDRR, we may be able to directly assist with treatments, as is the case with other EDRR species. The full list can be found on our website.