



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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<https://www.bonnercountyd.id.gov/noxious-weeds>

Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Noxious Weeds*

The regular session of the Idaho Legislature is a wrap for 2024. There are administrative rules governing Pesticide Use and Application (IDAPA 02.03.03) and Noxious Weeds/Invasive Species (IDAPA 02.06.09) that received legislative approval for proposed changes that were negotiated during 2023 rulemaking with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. Finalized, published rules carry the full force and effect of Idaho Law. The noteworthy changes in the Pesticide rule relates to the combining of pesticide license categories, and credit thresholds for licensed applicators. For professional applicators, the former standalone Herbicide and Insecticide/Fungicide categories have been combined, applying to the Agricultural and Horticultural categories. However, it's my understanding that current license holders are grandfathered in with their existing categories. The credit threshold changes apply to both professional applicators, as well as private applicators, of which there are landowners in Bonner County with private applicator licenses for purchasing and applying restricted use rodenticides. Summary of those changes are as follows: Professional applicators need to accrue 16 credits in two years instead of 15, however each credit hour has been reduced from 60 minutes of education to 50 minutes, having a net effect of an applicator spending 800 minutes in the classroom rather than 900 minutes. Private applicators need to accrue 7 credits in two years instead of 6, however, with the accreditation time being reduced, those applicators will attend 350 minutes of classroom education rather than 360 minutes. Now that I've thoroughly confused everyone (and bored the rest of which this does not apply to—sorry), the changes to the Noxious Weed rule is more straightforward, and applies to everyone. It was negotiated to add Cogon Grass to the Idaho noxious weed list, and to remove Buffalobur. One of my articles last year was on Buffalobur, an EDRR noxious weed in Bonner County. Yeah...never mind! :-)

Here is the Cogon Grass story...

Cogon Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) was originally introduced to the United States from Asia as a shipping contaminant via packing materials sent to Louisiana in the early 1900s. It proceeded to spread throughout the southeastern US over the course of the 20th Century, both intentionally and unintentionally. Aside from being an early tool utilized for erosion control, the desirable appearance led to transplanting. Cogon Grass is a perennial that grows 2 to 5 feet in height and exhibits bright, yellowish-green foliage with red tips. Another common name is Japanese Blood



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Grass, which is the one more commonly used in the landscape ornamental business—an industry that eventually recognized the appealing attributes of this grass and began distributing cultivars to garden centers (more on this shortly).

The rhizomes of Cogon Grass develop into hearty runners that are built to spread, and it is capable of invading moist and dry sites. Additionally, it's allelopathic—meaning it has properties that can interfere with surrounding plants' ability to grow. This, combined with the aggressive rhizomes, leads to Cogon Grass having the opportunity to create stout monocultures. Also, the foliage contains flammable oils that can contribute to the intensity and severity of wildfires. USDA-APHIS has Cogon Grass ranked as the 7th worst weed in the world.

Idaho was one of the first states outside of the southeast to experience the invasive effects of Cogon Grass. A few years ago, an infestation was reported in Ada County. Long story short, the nearly solid 1-acre patch of Cogon Grass was traced to a property on the border of an adjacent subdivision where it had been a part of that homeowner's landscaping for years. This awareness led to further discoveries in both Ada and Canyon Counties, which further led to the ISDA listing it as a temporary noxious weed in Idaho using the department's emergency authority—allowing those counties to utilize state financial resources to assist with the eradication efforts. Temporary listings sunset after 15 months, so it was taken up in 2023 negotiated rulemaking to debate whether or not it should be added as a permanent listing. The merits of the case warranted the listing.

A subtaxa of Cogon Grass/Japanese Blood Grass—*Imperata cylindrica rubra*—had been distributed as a sterile ornamental biotype that's non-invasive. That holds true for 7-10 years, at which point it reverts back to its wild biotype and becomes aggressive. I discovered a few on the shelf at the Home Depot garden center last summer and was able to get them removed after explaining it was in pending rule to be listed as a noxious weed in Idaho, but not after who knows how many went out. Red Sunset Grass is a lookalike, and can be difficult to distinguish from Cogon Grass unless it flowers. RSG has small, finely textured flowers that develop into seed plumes that persist throughout the fall. The flowers of Cogon Grass are caterpillar-like, and white to cream colored—but, they don't always flower, especially in their first few years. A subtle I.D. clue for Cogon Grass is the midvein of the leaf blades being clearly offset to one side. If you suspect having planted this, or moved to a property where it appears to be one of the landscaping plants, please remove it! Or if you have an established infestation that has spread, get in touch with me and we can assist with treatments via our Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) program.