



# BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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

## Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Weeds Manager*

The time of year we all live for has finally arrived! Well, maybe not for everyone—ski & snowboard enthusiasts aside, arguably the best time of year in the inland northwest is setting in. It's very uncertain how all this craziness in life is going to shake out in the coming months, but one thing that is certain is the arrival of summer! Allow me to be among the first to wish you a happy & healthy Independence Day, and a warm welcome to the dog days of summer.

Since I have fielded a handful of questions on it this year, I'm presenting **Lupine (Lupinus spp.)** as Weed of the Month. I don't write about native weeds in these articles very often, but it can't be a bad thing to briefly stray away from the norm of talking about exotic scourges of the county to feature something indigenous, and to hopefully clear up some confusion related to it. Most species of Lupine are native to the western United States. Lupines are herbaceous perennials (some can be annuals) that are typically 1-2 feet in height with upright stems and compounding palmate leaves. The flower spikes are long and dense, and variable in color. The most common flower colors are blue and purple for the species in our area, but can also be white, yellow, pink or red.

Silver Lupine, Wyeth Lupine and Silky Lupine are the ones most commonly found in our neck of the woods. Several others exist in drier parts of the western United States, rarely making an appearance in the wetter microclimate of Bonner County. Since Lupines belong on the landscape here, it's encouraged to keep them for the pollinators [wherever practical]. There is a "but"...they are poisonous to livestock, so they should be eliminated from active pastures and hay grounds. Lupines are not likely to create monocultures in the way that noxious weeds do since there are native control factors in play, i.e. - insects and moths that feed on them. One of their roles in our ecosystem, aside from being a food source for pollinators, is recolonization of the plant community through nitrogen fixation in areas recently burned, or otherwise majorly disturbed. Although they can be opportunistically exuberant in dry, infertile soils where they could dominate the native plant community, control is generally unnecessary in non-pasture areas.



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Assuming an infestation is in a pasture or hay field, control is necessary. Most Lupines are poisonous to livestock, including sheep, which are generally tolerant to weeds that are poisonous to cattle and horses. Contaminated hay is an issue, in large amounts. Another issue is late season pasturing—when most of the desirable forage is either gone or dried up, Lupines are still green and tender. Aside from the poisonous alkaloids, a birth defect called Crooked Calf Syndrome is possible if pregnant cows graze on Lupine. CCS is not pleasant, and most calves stricken with it need to be euthanized.

Tillage & digging are effective means of mechanical control, but the disturbance caused can promote additional growth from the seedbank. Mowing and/or weed whacking performed on a regular basis throughout the growing season can eventually reduce the vigor of established plants. The most effective herbicide combination for maximum control is Weedmaster® (2,4-D & Dicamba) + Escort® or generic (metsulfuron) + a surfactant. Lupines have a very long blooming period (May to August), so the window for an effective herbicide treatment is fairly long.

Lupines happen to contribute to a tricky situation being that they belong here, but are very problematic for pasture animals. Luckily there aren't TOO many plants that fall into that category, and just as luckily, coexistence can be managed without creating negative impacts on one community or the other.

The accompanying photo is a Wyeth Lupine.