



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*

“In like a lion, out like a lamb”... The 2018/2019 winter could not have been more opposite with cold, snowy weather starting in February and persisting in to March after December and January had been a cake walk. With winter finally behind us, it’s full steam ahead for spring and all associated happenings. Noxious weeds are categorized by the size and scope of their infestation level across the landscape; EDRR (Early Detection, Rapid Response), Contain, and Control—small, medium, and large infestations [respectively]. State and county weeds managers look to keep small infestations *small* with the goal of eradication, which is achievable if treated in the same season the particular weed is detected. Eradication is still possible if an infestation is not detected and treated right away provided it has not had an opportunity to establish much of a seed bank; this is where the split tiers of EDRR come in to play (see Bonner County EDRR noxious weeds list). The state offers grant funds to counties to support their eradication efforts of EDRR noxious weeds—we can utilize these funds to treat what the county lists in the EDRR category for private property owners at no cost to them. A full list of Bonner County’s EDRR noxious weeds can be found under the bullet point “New Invaders” on our website: <https://www.bonnercountyid.gov/noxious-weeds>.

Weed of the month, **Leafy Spurge** (*Euphorbia esula*), is one of the top tier EDRR noxious weeds in Bonner County. It is only confirmed to infest two [small] sites in the entire county, and we have one of those confirmed infestations eradicated at last check with the other being on the verge of eradication. Leafy Spurge is a hardy perennial known for its dangerous milky sap contained in the stems; the sap may cause permanent blindness if it comes in to contact with your eyes. It grows up to 3 feet in height, has narrow alternating leaves and small yellow flowers surrounded by green-ish yellow bracts. There is a non-invasive ornamental version called Myrtle Spurge that has the same appearance with the flowers and bracts as well as a similar overall plant structure, but the leaves are much different. Other ornamental spurges exist as well.



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Leafy Spurge was inadvertently introduced in to the United States from Europe as a seed impurity. It can be found in many of the northern states and southern Canada in waste areas, pastures, roadsides, CRP grounds and even riparian sites. It tolerates everything from semi-arid climates to several months of flooding conditions, provided the shoots can grow above the water surface. The spread is by seed and roots, although primarily roots—they are as vigorous and extensive as any deep rooted perennial out there. The root system is known to reach depths of 15 feet and store large amounts of nutrient reserves, making it difficult to kill and creating a very problematic, expensive issue if given the opportunity to proliferate a landscape.

The only mechanical control method to manage Leafy Spurge is constant cultivation throughout the growing season. The most effective ways to tackle it are either with specific herbicides that persist in the soil (such as aminocyclopyrachlor or picloram) to get to the farthest reaches of the nutrient-rich root system, or with targeted grazing using goats. The stem sap is toxic to cattle and horses, it severely irritates their mouths and digestive tracts, but goats tolerate it. There are several biological control agents approved for use on Leafy Spurge with the most effective one being the *Apthona* beetle. If in a situation where Leafy Spurge infests a locale on a Contain or Control level (medium or high infestation), the *Apthona* beetle would be a great tool to incorporate in to a management plan. With it being an EDRR in Bonner County (small infestation level), my preference would be to have my department come treat it with effective, approved herbicides upon a discovery. As touched on, there are ornamental look-alikes, so positive identification is key. Same goes for other Bonner County EDRR noxious weeds—all we need is positive identification and permission to access the property to conduct the treatments using the state Ag dollars. Field season is upon us...ready, set, go!