



# 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 transition from mud season to lilac season is nearly complete, which means we will be full steam ahead with farming, gardening, landscaping and evenings on the patio (my favorite). These activities come with some level of weed control maintenance—although I wouldn't recommend doing weed control chores while trying to enjoy time on the patio! I can assist with recommendations and techniques to maximize control in each scenario, and provide options.

Keep an eye out for small infestation noxious weed species and please report a suspected infestation. This list, (Early Detection, Rapid Response) along with color photos of each offender, is posted on our website. And the deadline (May 31) is looming for our Neighborhood Cooperative Cost Share Program. The program description and rules are also posted on our website, along with the sign-up packet.

Weed of the month is **Red Sorrel** (*Rumex acetosella*), or Sheep Sorrel. It's a perennial in the Buckwheat family, infesting most of the United States and occurs nearly worldwide. This is one that I received numerous calls on last year, as there were bumper crops of it all over Bonner County. It grows 6" – 18" tall and is most easily identified by the arrowhead shaped leaves and reddish flowering stems. Red Sorrel is dioecious, meaning male and female reproductive parts occur in separate plants. The flowers on the males range from greenish-yellow to orange, where the female flowers exhibit varying shades of red. The flowering period seems to be from late May through June in our area. The seeds are effortlessly spread by wild game, livestock, birds, footwear, tires and equipment. Root fragments also regenerate new colonies.



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Red Sorrel infestations make for low quality hay and can be toxic to livestock, although poisonings are not common. It contains oxalates, which horses can be sensitive to. The oxalate levels are variable in Red Sorrel, so either a large amount or an extra-large amount needs to be consumed in a short period of time to cause issues. The foliage has a very sour flavor, so most animals avoid grazing it.

This particular specimen does not care for disturbance, where many other invasives thrive on disturbance. With that, it can be exhausted by mechanical control in a shorter period of time than a long roster of other perennial weeds. You can't disk a field once or twice and expect it to disappear, but if you work the ground over the course of a growing season and promote rapid expansion of pasture grasses with nitrogen the following spring, the Red Sorrel could be outcompeted. Mowing is not an effective method of control; the roots will continue to propagate infestations and the seed heads can adapt by developing below the mower blade mark. Being in the Buckwheat family, it can be thoroughly controlled long term using an aminopyralid based herbicide (Milestone® or Opensight®) at any point during the growing season. It's still ideal to apply to actively growing plants, but if applied at, near or after time of seed dispersal, the aminopyralid covered seeds will die upon trying to sprout the next year (assuming the application area remains relatively undisturbed). Curtail®/Cody® or Weedmaster®/TripletSF® can also be used to achieve some control—the earlier in the plants' development that an application happens, the better the results with these chemistries. If an infestation is in a sensitive setting, such as landscapes or gardens, you can apply a glyphosate product with a wick wiper to avoid damaging nearby desirables with overspray that could occur from a traditional, foliar herbicide application. Hand pulling is also a viable option for small, isolated patches.

Meet you on the patio!