



## BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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

### Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Weeds Manager*

Hope this fall finds you well and on schedule with winter preparations. This is the last installment for the year 2020. Is everyone ready for it to be over? Yep, me too! Despite the pandemic, we had a solid field season with our operations and cooperative projects, and customer traffic never fell below average. I had mentioned this spring that weeds are unaffected by disruptive, human issues. The season showed that citizen weed control warriors concur—so thank you all for continuing to do your part!

We're now in the time of year for clipping and saving these articles until spring. Or, if you put them in such a safe spot that even you can't find them later, you can now reference the archives on our website. :-)

Weed of the Month is **St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*)**, sometimes called Goatweed or Klamathweed. Originally from Europe and western Asia, this is a former Idaho state listed noxious weed that was de-listed some time ago. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture is often petitioned to add a weed to the noxious weeds list, and if they end up taking it to the legislature, they typically want to see one dropped to add one in order to avoid running the risk of the list becoming diluted. St. Johnswort is one that hit the chopping block to make way for another; that's the short story. Currently, there are 8 other western states that still have St. Johnswort on their noxious weeds list, including all of our neighboring states. With that, we have St. Johnswort listed as an invasive weed of concern in Bonner County. Even though some exotic invaders are not on the state noxious weeds list, it doesn't mean they are not an environmental or economic threat, it only means you're not obligated by state law to control them.

St. Johnswort is an herbaceous, tap-rooted perennial that grows 1-3 feet in height (sometimes taller in ideal conditions) producing numerous branches. Even though it's herbaceous, the base of the stems are somewhat woody, particularly later in the growing season. Flowers are bright yellow with 5 petals surrounding a thick cluster of stamens. Aside from the flowers, a key factor to confirm identity is the translucent specks covering the leaves—most noticeable when holding the leaves up to light.



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St. Johnswort thrives on disturbance; recently logged or cleared areas, heavily grazed pastures and recently disturbed roadsides. Showing its adaptability, it can also be found in woodland and natural meadow areas. Aside from infestations decreasing the amount of desirable forage in a pasture or open rangeland, it contains phototoxic compounds. If livestock (especially white-haired) graze on St. Johnswort and subsequently are exposed to strong sunlight, they may develop burned-blistered skin.

Mechanical methods of control may be effective depending on the situation. Hand pulling is only practical on very small infestations and where other means of control may not be suitable—gardens, landscape beds, etc. St. Johnswort does not tolerate tillage very well, so that's an option in areas where it makes sense. Mowing is mostly ineffective due to resprouting from roots, but it may postpone seed dispersal.

The most effective herbicide combination where allowed by the label is Opensight® (aminopyralid + metsulfuron) tank mixed with 2,4-D and a surfactant. You may achieve some control with Weedmaster® (2,4-D + dicamba), Vastlan® (triclopyr) or Crossbow® (2,4-D + triclopyr) if the use site is not appropriate for an aminopyralid product. Herbicide applications on St. Johnswort need to happen earlier in the season [while actively growing], and preferably prior to flowering. Control percentage seems to drop significantly after flowering.

Biological control for St. Johnswort has generally been regarded as a success story via the Chrysolina beetle. Overall St. Johnswort density has been reduced in areas of widespread Chrysolina releases, although it seems to be cyclical—possibly due to climatic issues, according to the University of California Weed Research & Information Center. In my observations, Bonner County is a microcosm of that research. Tens of thousands of the Chrysolina beetles have been released across northern Idaho over the last several years. St. Johnswort infestation levels across the Bonner County landscape as a whole are still high, but in years where the Chrysolina cycle is on the uptick, STJW densities seem to go down in some pockets.

All the best during the holiday season!