



# BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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

## Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl—*Director, Bonner County Noxious Weeds*

I've featured a few different turf weeds over the years in the November issue due to the late treatment window. One that I have encountered consistent questions about while on landowner site visits, is Black Medic (*Medicago lupulina*). Most assume that it's a variety of clover; not a bad guess being that the leaf structure resembles that of a traditional clover, but Black Medic is part of a different genera of legumes. *Medicago* is from the Greek word for 'alfalfa'. It's a short-lived perennial with low, trailing growth habits. The leaves are compound, with three, finely serrated leaflets per cluster. The flowers are small, about an eighth of an inch in diameter, and bright yellow. Being that legumes are in the pea family, the seeds are developed in pods. The pods are tiny—barely noticeable—and contain only a single seed.

Black Medic was likely introduced to North America via Europe/Asia as a crop seed impurity, and is documented as having been here for about 200 years—almost as long as Joe Biden has been in politics. :-) Even though it's not actually native, Black Medic is considered naturalized in this part of the world, much like the Dandelion. The issues it causes are not usually that consequential—as such, it's not listed as a noxious weed in Idaho, nor in any of the western states. As far as my cursory research tells me, Florida is the only US state where it is listed as a noxious weed (the fauna & flora is in a world of its own down there). It can technically be poisonous to livestock if they consume it late in the growing season since seeds in the pea family are alkaloid fixers, but based on real world situations, they could never consume enough in a short enough period of time to experience anything other than some bloating (at worst). In most contexts, Black Medic fits the fundamental definition of a simple weed; a plant out of place. As opposed to an aggressive, invasive weed that quickly takes over, or a noxious weed that has a codified designation for control due to causing some form of verifiable harm.

Generally speaking, turf and landscapes are the primary sites where Black Medic exhibits the 'plant out of place' tendencies. Most turf labeled herbicides have Black Medic listed as a controlled weed, so there are several viable options. Trimec®, TripletSF®, Foundation® and Desperado® are a few combination products that perform well, not only on Black Medic, but also on a wide variety of other nuisance turf weeds. All of these contain broadleaf specific chemistries formulated to take out the broadleaf weeds while being easy on the improved turf grasses. Improved turf (managed lawns) can be treated up until either snow covered or until the ground is frozen solid. Cultural control certainly comes into play when engaged in a management plan for weeds in turf—which involves keeping the desirable crop as healthy as possible in order to outcompete future non-desirables. A fall herbicide application can, and in most cases should, be carried out in conjunction with a fertilizer treatment. There are several fertilizer blends that work just fine, but an option that's low in nitrogen and strong in the other elements is my preferred choice due to perennial grasses not utilizing nitrogen this time of year. You can use a balanced blend if that's what you have on hand, it won't necessarily hurt—just potentially feed undesirable annuals with the



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nitrogen component. As an augmented measure for turf maintenance, mid-late fall is a good time to apply fungicides as a preventative practice. Snow mold is an issue that I have faced coming out of winter, and it can cause some frustratingly ugly dead spots throughout your lawn. PillarG® and HeadwayG® are quality fungicides labeled for a number of turf diseases. They are dry granular formulations, so applications can be made with basic fertilizer spreaders.

Don't forget to winterize your sprayers. Clean the tank(s) with either an actual tank cleaning compound, or a baking soda solution. Finish it off by running a little bit of RV antifreeze through the system, even if your storage is climate controlled. Antifreeze contains lubricating properties that help extend the life of sprayer pumps and system components that sit idle for several months.

One of the accompanying photos is a crisp close-up of Black Medic, while the other one demonstrates it in the context of turf.