



## BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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### Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl—*Bonner County Noxious Weeds*

The acceleration of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has approached almost overwhelming levels. At least that's my perception. I just watched my Seahawks win the Super Bowl for the second time in my life—and being that it was my team in the big game, I used most of the commercial breaks to fetch another beer or snack or to rotate rooms to watch with another family member. The few commercials that I did catch were mostly promoting some form of A.I. You can't seem to escape it even if you want to. I could launch into a diatribe on its detriment to honesty, art and creativity in general, but being that it's here and not going anywhere, finding the good is important. In terms of internet research, it does condense highlights and distill information down to the brass tacks, saving some time and dives down irrelevant rabbit holes. On the other hand, A.I. generated internet searches do not always yield important nuances. If you research a weed for identification characteristics, my experience indicates that A.I. produces reasonable results. However, if you follow that up with a search for control measures, that's when inconsistencies and missing nuances come into play, especially regarding herbicide control. It's important to dig deeper than the A.I. summary by looking at scientific papers, university resources and published documents from germane agencies. For example, the searches that I have experimented with regarding 'how to kill... fill in the blank', A.I. sometimes lumps together selective and non-selective herbicides without delineation, and doesn't generally consider use sites. Modern day technological aids can be convenient and timesaving, but it's not a total substitute for thorough analysis.

I'm back on the EDRR train this month. For review, Early Detection, Rapid Response noxious weeds are those Idaho listed specimens that occur on a limited enough basis locally to meet eradication objectives. It also includes those that are close enough to show up at any time, automatically creating an EDRR situation upon discovery.

Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) infestations occur throughout the Clearwater region and up through the Lewiston area. There is a little bit inventoried in Kootenai County, and there was a small infestation in Boundary County near the Canadian border eradicated last year. So far, knock on wood, we're in the clear in Bonner County, but it's high on the radar. Poison Hemlock is a non-native biennial, with second year plants consistently bolting to heights of 4-6 feet and occasionally up to 10 feet. First year rosettes look fern-like with the heavily divided leaves. The characteristic separating it from look-alikes during the second year bolted phase is the hollow stems, which are blotched with purple spots and striations. The flowers are white and grouped together in umbrella shaped clusters. An additional clue in all phases is the scent. When leaves are crushed, it emits an unpleasant, mouse urine odor.



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This part is important—do not handle Poison Hemlock, or suspected Poison Hemlock, without gloves. All plant parts are poisonous to humans, including dermal exposure. Internal poisonings have been documented from ingestion, due to mistaking Poison Hemlock for Parsley (which seems difficult to believe given the disparate smells, but I digress). Additionally, Poison Hemlock contains highly concentrated alkaloids that are toxic to all domestic animals if consumed. It is also adaptable to sites of varying conditions, including wet and dry, facilitating the ability to become invasive. The nationwide seriousness of Poison Hemlock is such that it was featured in a story in USA Today in 2022, highlighting its toxicity, providing identification tips and indicating the importance of public awareness.

To prevent accidental introduction, be cautious about importing soils, mulches or other mediums from outside of Bonner County—especially from Kootenai County to the south in Idaho, and from Spokane County to the south in Washington. If detected, destroy immediately or report it to my office for assistance. Being an EDRR (early detection, rapid response) noxious weed, we have the landowner compliance assistance mechanism built into our program with state cost share funding for implementing eradication action at no charge to the landowner. This goes for all EDRR categorized noxious weeds in Bonner County. The list can be found on our website.

I will point out that robust Queen Anne's Lace plants look similar, but the key factor is the absence of purple spots on the stems, which occurs exclusively on Poison Hemlock. See accompanying photos.