

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is a noxious weed?**

**Why are noxious weeds so bad?**

**What noxious weeds are commonly found in El Paso County?**

**How can I control noxious weeds on my property?**

### **What is a noxious weed?**

According to the Colorado Noxious Weed Act (Title 35, Article 5.5), a noxious weed is an alien or non-native plant which has been designated as such by the state or local government and meets one of the following criteria:

- (a) Aggressively invades or is detrimental to economic crops or native plant communities;
- (b) Is poisonous to livestock;
- (c) Is a carrier of detrimental insects, diseases, or parasites;
- (d) The direct or indirect effect of the presence of this plant is detrimental to the environmentally sound management of natural or agriculture ecosystems.

Noxious weeds are prioritized by the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) as List A, B, or C species.

**List A:** Rare noxious weed species that must be eradicated wherever detected statewide.

**List B:** Noxious weeds with discrete statewide distribution that are subject to eradication, containment, or suppression, depending upon the infestation location, in order to stop the continued spread of these species.

**List C:** Widespread and well-established noxious weeds in Colorado for which control is recommended by the state, and may be required by local government.

More information pertaining to Colorado's noxious weeds (including the complete Colorado Noxious Weed List) can be found at: <http://www.colorado.gov/ag/weeds>.

### **Why are noxious weeds so bad?**

Noxious weeds are the culprits behind a variety of far-reaching negative impacts on people, wildlife, and the environment. Noxious weeds have a big effect on agriculture by reducing livestock production and crop yields as well as adding significantly to the costs of production through management costs. Noxious weeds can also greatly reduce the value of land when infestations are severe.

Wildlife habitat and forage are severely degraded by noxious weeds, often rendering the land totally unusable for wildlife. Noxious weeds are notorious for displacing native plant communities and forming monocultures in their stead, as well as threatening rare and endangered plants.

Many noxious weeds alter or damage environmental processes like hydrology, nutrient cycling, and fire cycles, or degrade the environment by increasing soil salinity or erosion. Many recreational activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, bird watching, and boating are also negatively impacted by noxious weeds.

A few noxious weed facts:

- Bison use was reduced 78% and deer use was reduced 83% on land invaded by leafy spurge (Trammell and Butler, 1995).
- 7 rare and uncommon plant species were eliminated in 3 years due to spotted knapweed in Glacier National Park (Sheley et al., 2005).
- A 56% increase in water run-off and a 192% increase in soil erosion were noted on land invaded and dominated by spotted knapweed (Lacey et al., 1989).
- Purple loosestrife costs \$45 million per year in control costs and forage losses in the United States (Pimentel et al., 2005).
- The direct and indirect economic impacts of spotted, diffuse, and Russian knapweed cause an estimated \$42 million in annual losses to the state of Montana (Hirsch and Leitch, 1996).

### **What noxious weeds are commonly found in El Paso County?**

Bouncingbet (*Saponaria officinalis*)

Canada thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)

Chamomile (*Matricaria perforate*)

Chinese clematis (*Clematis orientalis*)

Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

Common teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*)

Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*)

Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)

Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)

Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*)

Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*)

Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)

Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)

Salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*)

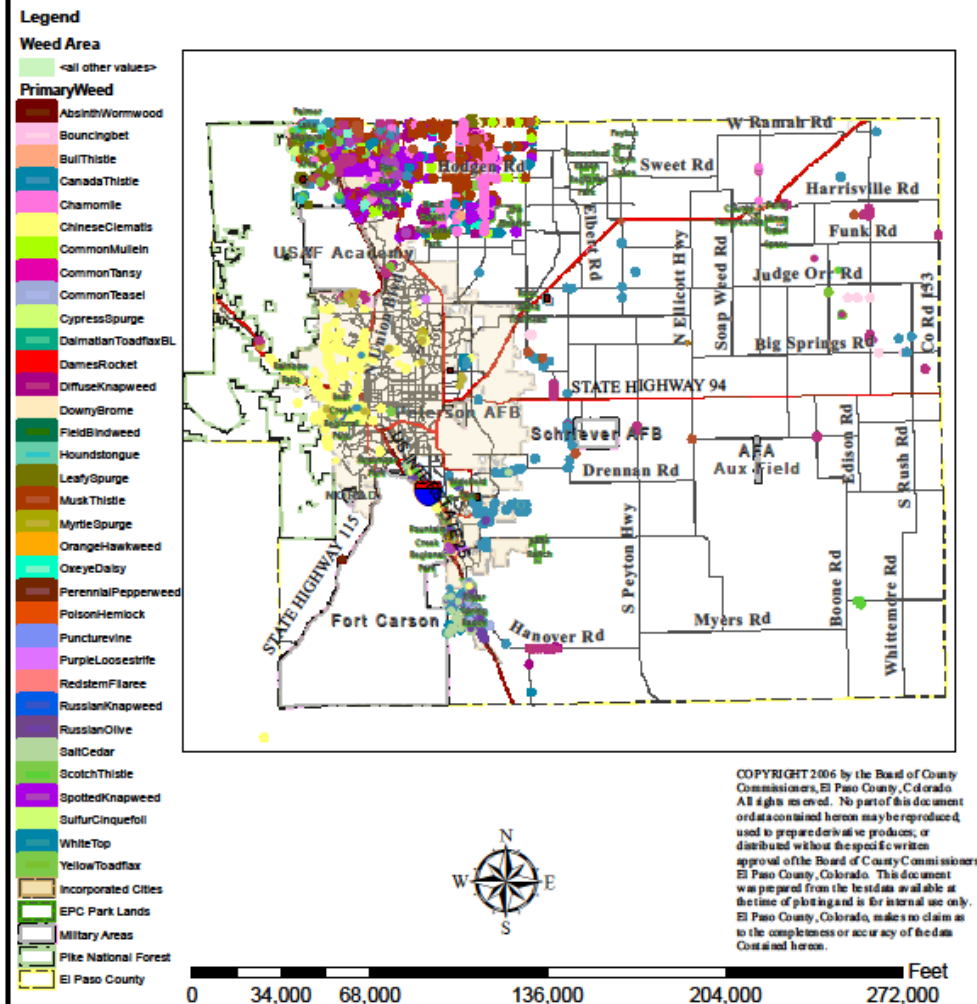
Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)

Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)

Yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)



## Noxious Weed ROW Distribution 2010



Mapping of all El Paso County right-of-ways has not yet been completed and, as such, map only reflects current data.

### How can I control noxious weeds on my property?

The most effective way to control noxious weeds is through Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM incorporates weed biology, environmental information, and available management techniques to create a management plan that prevents unacceptable damage from pests, such as weeds, and poses the least risk to people and the environment. IPM is often a combination of treatment options that, when used together, provide optimum control for noxious weeds. However, IPM does not necessarily imply that multiple control techniques have to be used or that chemical control options should be avoided.

**Prevention:** The most effective, economic, and ecologically sound management technique. The spread of noxious weeds can be prevented by: cleaning equipment, vehicles, clothing, and shoes before moving to weed-free areas; using weed-free sand, soil, and gravel; and using certified weed-free seed and feed.

**Cultural:** Promoting and maintaining healthy native or other desirable vegetation. Methods include proper grazing management (prevention of overgrazing), re-vegetating or re-seeding, fertilizing, and irrigation.

**Biological:** The use of an organism such as insects, diseases, and grazing animals to control noxious weeds. Not an effective method when eradication is the objective, but can be used to reduce the impact and dominance of noxious weeds. Useful for large, heavily infested areas.

**Mechanical:** Manual or mechanical means to remove, kill, injure, or alter growing conditions of unwanted plants. Methods include mowing, hand-pulling, tilling, mulching, cutting, and clipping seed heads.

**Chemical:** The use of herbicides to suppress or kill noxious weeds by disrupting biochemical processes unique to plants.

Whether eradication or suppression is the objective of noxious weed management, priority should always be given to restoring desirable vegetation and a healthy ecosystem to prevent further noxious weed infestations.

The El Paso County Forestry and Noxious Weed Inspector can provide technical assistance for determining appropriate noxious weed control methods on your property. For more information please see the El Paso County Common Noxious Weeds and Control Methods booklet or visit the Colorado Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed Management Program website at <http://www.colorado.gov/ag/weeds>.