KC Weed News – December 2013

King County, Washington
(http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-news.aspx)

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Weed of the Month: Evergreen Blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*), a Class C noxious weed in Washington

The featured weed this month often gets second billing to its more famous cousin, Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus or R. bifrons*), so I thought it was only fair to give it a turn in the spotlight. Evergreen blackberry, also called cut-leaf blackberry, is not nearly as common a sight in the northwest as Himalayan blackberry, but it occurs in pretty much the same types of places and creates the same problems. In fact, evergreen blackberry can be even more annoying because of its recurved thorns that tend to catch and hold on even better than other blackberries. Its berries are tasty and plump, although I have heard different opinions about how they compare to the Himalayan berries when collected in the wild, and most people agree our native trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) beats them all in flavor intensity.

The Latin name for evergreen blackberry, *Rubus laciniatus*, is a clue to the best way to distinguish this species from the other blackberries. The leaves are highly lacerated, lacy and jagged-looking. I think they look like someone went crazy with scissors on some Himalayan blackberry leaves. Otherwise the plant looks more or less the same as Himalayan blackberry, with its stout, thorny, clambering or ascending stems up to 30 feet long and its white-pink flowers and juicy black berries. Up close there are a few differences. Evergreen blackberry flower petals are generally lobed on the ends, unlike Himalayan blackberry flowers, and there are only a few pistils, compared with many pistils on Himalayan flowers. Also, evergreen blackberry blooms later in the summer, usually June-August, as opposed to May-July for Himalayan.

Evergreen blackberry is European in origin, but has been cultivated and hybridized into a wide range of commercial blackberry crop varieties that are grown in the United States. According to the Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission, Thornless Evergreen (*Rubus laciniatus*) is the second most planted commercial trailing blackberry. The variety was cultivated from wild seeds and offers some advantages like

cold tolerance and relatively late berry production in August. The same source says that this species is native to England and is often considered the "traditional blackberry". Oregon processes much of its evergreen blackberry crop so it is likely this berry you are eating in products like blackberry jam and baked goods.

As a naturalized and weedy plant, Himalayan blackberry is much more widespread in the Northwest than evergreen blackberry, but it is not clear whether it is that much more invasive. Both species form large, dense thickets that exclude native vegetation and interfere with most uses of the land such as pasture, forestry, landscaping, recreation and native habitat. In addition, both species are more common in disturbed or waste areas where the native or other vegetation is disrupted, but can also invade into relatively pristine natural areas, often getting a foothold in a disturbed area like a trail, road or utility corridor, and then spreading from there.

Interestingly, in trail weed surveys in the Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie areas, evergreen blackberry shows up more often than Himalayan blackberry, and sometimes in much more remote areas where there are almost no other non-native species. It does seem that evergreen blackberry can invade at least as, if not more, successfully in our forests than Himalayan blackberry. However, it is also true that once Himalayan blackberry gets established, it grows more quickly and more aggressively than evergreen blackberry, and just about any other species in the Pacific Northwest for that matter.

For more information about evergreen blackberry identification and control, please see the blackberry information page on our website. In addition, there are photos and distribution information on the UW Burke Museum website, as well as the Washington State Noxious Weed Board website.

Weed tips for December

Make sure your source materials are all weed-free. If you are purchasing soil, gravel, mulch or any other materials, there are ways to reduce the risk of getting weed-contaminated product. Some vendors will guarantee the material is weed-free, but make sure you agree on which weeds it is free of. For instance, weed-free hay and mulch is often certified free of invasive and noxious weeds but may not be free of all poisonous plants. See the WWHAM website for more information. If you can't get a weed-free guarantee, there are testing services that will check for noxious weeds. For instance, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Seed Laboratory will test soil, compost or mulch for the presence of noxious weeds. It takes approximately 3 weeks to germinate the seeds and the fee is $30 per sample. For more information on the services of the lab contact Fern Perry, Idaho State Department of Agriculture Seed Laboratory, 208-332-8632 or Fern.perry@agri.idaho.gov.

Screen your plants before you buy. Winter is a great time for curling up with your favorite electronic device and doing research on cool new plants for your garden. While you're doing this, I'd recommend a simple screening search. I use Google and search under the plant's Latin name and the word "invasive". If anyone has had trouble with the plant, you are sure to see some results with this search. There are government and educational websites with a lot of great information, but often I get the latest and most detailed information from gardeners themselves. The website Dave's Garden is one of the best for getting

gardener feedback from all over. For instance, check out the helpful, negative comments on the page of our newly listed noxious weed lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*).

If the sun pops out, get some Vitamin D by pulling weeds. There are many weeds that you can still control this time of year. All evergreen weeds are there for the picking, such as English ivy, holly, laurel, Scotch broom and of course blackberry. Other great weeds to target are creeping buttercup, yellow archangel, bull thistle and any other low-growing rosettes that are overwintering. If the soil isn't too frozen or muddy, it may even be easier to pull the roots out than in the summer. I recommend short bursts of high-energy weeding to avoiding getting too cold, and double up your garden gloves with thin insulating liner gloves so your fingers don't go numb. And remember to reward yourself afterwards with your favorite warm beverage.

Weed Specialist job opening with the King County Noxious Weed Program

King County has an opening for a weed specialist to join our team here at the noxious weed program. This is a full-time, seasonal position with full King County benefits, generally working from March to November. Applications will be accepted from December 16, 2013 to January 13, 2014 through the King County jobs website http://www.kingcounty.gov/jobs.aspx . The full job description will be available online as of 12/16/2013.

The weed specialist position combines field and office work and requires considerable organizational skill because of the complexity and size of the work load. In our program, the regional noxious weed specialist achieves control of priority noxious weed species in their region of the county by working directly with a wide range of landowners, businesses, organizations and public agencies, in order to meet the goals of the Washington State noxious weed law and to minimize the impacts of noxious weeds in King County. The position requires broad noxious weed knowledge and experience as well as excellent communication and people skills. For more information, contact Sasha Shaw at sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov or visit the county jobs website and search for Noxious Weed Specialist.

Public meeting to decide on 2014 King County Noxious Weed List

The King County Noxious Weed Control Board will be meeting on **January 15, 2014** to adopt the annual King County Noxious Weed List. The public are welcome to suggest proposals for weed list changes at the meeting or ahead of time by contacting our program. The meeting begins at 4:00 p.m. and will be held at the Bellevue Lake Hills Library, 15590 Lake Hills Blvd., Bellevue, WA 98007.

The King County Noxious Weed List includes the species listed by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board as Class A weeds or Class B species designated for required control in King County (see the King County website on Weed Lists and Laws for more information). These noxious weeds are damaging to natural and agricultural resources but are still limited enough in distribution that containment and eradication are possible in the county. For example, giant hogweed, a Class A noxious weed, is a public health hazard and ornamental escapee, and purple loosestrife, a Class B

noxious weed, is a wetland invader that reduces wildlife habitat and clogs waterways. In addition, the King County Weed Board can select additional state-listed noxious weeds for required control. For instance, tansy ragwort has been selected by the King County Weed Board for required control in King County in past years due to its impact on livestock and hay production.

According to the State Noxious Weed Law, the County Weed Board can only require control of species listed on the State Noxious Weed List, but they can add other species to the county weed list for educational purposes. For instance, English holly and bittersweet nightshade are on the King County educational list of Weeds of Concern because of their potential impact to forests and streamside habitat respectively, but they are not on the state noxious weed list and control is not required.

In general, control is only required for noxious weeds that are still limited enough in distribution to allow for effective containment and eradication. For widespread noxious weeds, the County Weed Board encourages control through education and technical assistance. For example, English ivy has significant impacts on trees and forest habitat and Scotch broom is a serious pest on cleared land and rights-of-way, but both are too widespread for required control to be feasible, so the Board instead focuses on outreach about their impacts, encouraging control where feasible, and teaching effective control methods.

There were several changes for 2014 to the Washington State Noxious Weed List (see the What's New section of the state weed board website), but few that will significantly impact the King County weed list. There are three new species (or groups) on the state list for 2014, lesser celandine, non-native cattail and Russian olive, however none are designated for required control in King County. In addition, all the yellow-flowered non-native hawkweeds have been combined into two subgenera groups – the meadow hawkweeds and the wall hawkweeds. Both groups are designated for required control in King County.

For more information on the King County weed list and the Washington State noxious weed law, see the website at www.kingcounty.gov/weeds under Weed Lists and Laws or contact Sasha Shaw at sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov. The public is invited to attend and provide comments or proposals on weed list changes for the year. Comments can also be submitted in advance by email to sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov.

Farmer or Forester needed to represent Weed District 5 (eastern King County from Enumclaw to Skykomish)

Weed Board District 5 includes a large part of eastern King County, stretching from the Enumclaw Plateau, through Maple Valley and Covington and up through the forest lands on the east side of the county to Skykomish. The King County Noxious Weed Control Board is asking interested residents of this area to apply to join the Weed Board, and particularly encourages farmers, foresters or other agricultural producers to consider joining the Board. Because of the impacts of noxious weeds on agricultural production, the King County Weed Board is very interested in increasing representation on the Board from the county's farming community. The main qualification is a desire to reduce the impacts of noxious weeds in King County.

The Weed Board directs and oversees the King County Noxious Weed Control Program and helps set priorities for the county weed list and the activities of the noxious weed program. Board members are key

advisors on noxious weed issues and contribute their experience and expertise to the running of the program. They are also very important advocates in the county for ensuring that the county uses public resources wisely, fairly and effectively toward the goal of minimizing the impacts of noxious weeds on the natural and economic resources of the county, while staying in compliance with the state noxious weed law. For more information about the Weed Board and application information, please contact Sasha Shaw at 206-477-4824 or sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov.

Kirkland Public Works responds quickly to new parrotfeather infestation

A new parrotfeather site was discovered in a Kirkland storm water pond by an observant city employee. In late October, City of Kirkland Public Works employee Darrin Young spotted an unusual plant growing in a City of Kirkland –managed storm water pond. Using a pocket weed identification guide published by King County Noxious Weeds, Darrin determined that the plant might be parrotfeather, a regulated Class B noxious weed. Native to the Amazon basin, parrotfeather plants can alter the physical and chemical characteristics of lakes and streams (see our website for more information). Darrin notified his supervisor who in turn notified the county noxious weed program. Program staff confirmed that the plant was parrotfeather and that there are no know locations nearby or within the Juanita Creek drainage, within which the storm water pond resides. In early November, City of Kirkland staff worked with King County Noxious Weed staff to get the plants treated with an aquatic herbicide, since this is the most effective way to eradicate the plant and keep it from spreading. The two agencies will work together in the coming years to monitor and re-treat the plants as necessary to hopefully eradicate the plant from the site and keep it out of the Juanita Creek drainage and out of Lake Washington. This is a good example of *early-detection, rapid-response* and effective communication between agencies.

Good news on Vashon's yellow floating-heart infestation

Weed specialist Maria Winkler was pleasantly surprised to see no re-growth of yellow floating-heart (*Nymphoides peltata*) on the ponds at Pacific Crest Farm on Vashon when she stopped by this September. And even better, the ponds were now home to a variety of native water plants such as large-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton amplifolius*). Yellow floating-heart has only been found in this one location in King County, which is fortunate considering how difficult it is to eradicate once established in a natural waterbody. Infestations in other parts of the world are truly intimidating; this is definitely not a weed we want to have. Although it looks innocent enough – like a small, heart-shaped lily pad with pretty, fringed yellow flowers – it is capable of completely covering vast areas of open water. When the plant was first found on the two ponds at the farm in August 2008, the entire surface area of the ponds was covered. Aquatic herbicides were the only effective method known for this plant, so the ponds were treated each year to try to eradicate the plant and return the ponds to native vegetation. Last year it was down to a tiny area and this year, there was no floating-heart to be seen. Definitely cause for celebration, but we will monitor the site for the next few years to make sure it is well and truly gone.

KCD Native Bareroot Plant Sale taking orders

The King Conservation District native plant bareroot sale offers an affordable way to obtain native shrubs and trees this winter. They offer a wide variety of native trees, shrubs and groundcovers for home landscapes and conservation purposes, including wildlife habitat, windbreaks, hedgerows, reforestation and stream enhancement. Because they are bareroot, they are less costly than potted plants, although the downside is they need to be kept moist and planted as soon as possible. KCD takes online orders through February 9, with pre-order pick up and a walk-up sale on March 1, 2014 in Renton. See the KCD website www.kingcd.org/pro_native.htm for the order form and all the details.

According to the website, new for 2014 are three species—Blue Elderberry, Blackcap Raspberry and Black Hawthorn—selected in consultation with the Snoqualmie Tribe Environmental & Natural Resources Division for plants with cultural significance for traditional food, medicine, and/or fiber. To learn more about these plants, you can contact Heidi Bohan, Ethnobotanist, or Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Environmental & Natural Resources Division Director.

Grant opportunity for urban stream restoration and water quality projects

Proposals are due **February 5, 2014** for a national grant program that seeks to support community-led wetland, stream and coastal restoration projects throughout the United States. The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program began in 1999 as a partnership among several federal agencies and organizations, and expanded in 2013 to include the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, which helps urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. Since its start, the program has supported over 620 projects with more than $5 million in federal funds, $3.7 million in private and corporate contributions and $37 million in matching funds at the local level. Major funding for the 2013 Five Star and Urban Waters program is provided by EPA, the US Forest Service, FedEx and Southern Company.

According to their website, funding priorities for this program include:

* On-the-ground wetland, riparian, in-stream and/or coastal habitat restoration
* Meaningful education and training activities, either through community outreach, participation and/or integration with K-12 environmental curriculum
* Measurable ecological, educational and community benefits
* Partnerships: Five Star projects should engage a diverse group of community partners to achieve ecological and educational outcomes

Any public or private entity can apply and there is a 1:1 match requirement that can be met by in-kind or cash match. Preference is shown to organizations directly connected to the local community who can monitor and sustain these projects for 5 years or more. There is a strong emphasis on partnerships and

cooperative projects. The Five Star program provides $20,000 to $50,000 grants with an average award size of $25,000. Grants that are in the $30,000-$50,000 range are typically two years and are in urban areas. Project sites may be public land - parks, streams, school campuses - or private land such as corporate facilities. Because public participation is paramount in community-based restoration, these sites should be accessible to the community.

The Request for Proposals, and additional background information, can be found on their website at http://www.nfwf.org/fivestar/Pages/home.aspx

WDFW accepting applications for ALEA volunteer grants

Starting Dec. 1, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will accept grant applications for volunteer projects that benefit fish and wildlife. WDFW currently expects that about $258,000 will be available for these grants, funded through the state's Aquatic Land Enhancement Account (ALEA), beginning July 1, 2014. Five major types of projects are funded through the program, although others may be considered. These project types include habitat restoration, scientific research, public education, facility development and artificial fish production. Eligible applicants are citizens, non-profit organizations, schools (including universities), tribes and political subdivisions of the state such as conservation districts. For-profit businesses, as well as state and federal agencies are not eligible. Funds are provided on a cost-reimbursement basis and may not be used for salaries, wages, stipends or benefits. Grantees are required to follow state purchasing rules and report on their progress quarterly. For more information, interested persons should visit the ALEA Grant Program website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/grants/alea/index.html .

Cool tools for your wish list

People with high weed enthusiasm (for controlling weeds, not growing them) sometimes design some very innovative and targeted weed control tools. I'm featuring a few here that caught our attention recently, but I'm not intending to endorse any of these products or to exclude other great tools. If you know about a cool tool that you would like to share, let me know and I'll feature it in a future edition. Comments welcome as always to sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov.

The Extractigator is a stout, bright orange pulling device for woody weeds, similar to the Weed Wrench that is no longer being sold. It was designed by Shawn Taylor of Vancouver Island, British Columbia for his own use after he bought 22 acres of broom infested forestland in BC. The Extractigator is lighter that the weed wrench and has several innovative mechanical design features, as well as the Big Foot accessory, which improves leverage on sandy or soft soil. For more information visit www.extractigator.com.

The EZ-Ject lance injects weed control capsules into tree trunks, allowing for a time-efficient and highly targeted way to manage invasive trees. The lance is portable, although not small enough for a back pack, and fairly simple to use, although not completely problem-free since it jams on occasion and doesn't always

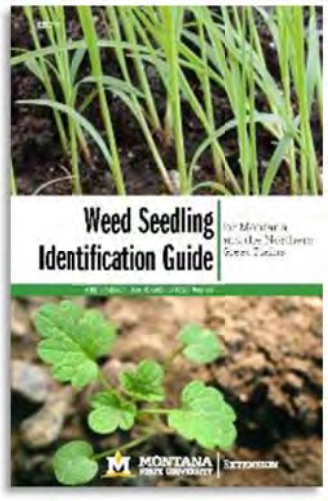
get the capsules in far enough. This tool has become very popular for targeted holly control in more remote natural areas where lots of ground needs to be covered in a short time. There are capsules of glyphosate or imazapyr, but only the imazapyr capsules were effective on holly in trials done by EarthCorps.

The WeedShear is a V-shaped cutter for lake weeds that looks pretty fun to use, if a bit risky with the ultra sharp blade. There are probably other manufacturers of cutters like this, but I came across this one and enjoyed the video. The website also is very enthusiastic about its product, which is always fun to see. This type of tool is very useful on clearing fragrant water lily and other plants that can be a nuisance around docks and swimming areas. Just remember to check your local rules about removing lake weeds and make sure to get your copy of the Aquatic Plants and Fish pamphlet from WDFW before controlling weeds in the water.

The Heli-saw is a rotating saw suspended from a helicopter to cut tall tree branches near power lines and ROWs to complement ground crew work. It is marketed as useful for high elevations, steep terrain and remote locations. The Heli-saw cuts a 20 foot swath and can trim 150 feet from the top down. According to their website, this aerial mower can do in a day what a ground crew would take weeks to accomplish. Heli-saw was made in Oregon in 2012. For more information and an action video see www.Heli-Dunn.com.

New weed publications from Montana State University

Just in time for Christmas comes a great ID guide on baby weeds from Montana State University Extension titled **Weed Seedling Identification Guide for Montana and the Northern Great Plains**. We have some of these species here as well, so this could be just what you need for finding the weeds when they are still small. It is very helpful to be able to identify plants as young as possible to better monitor and respond to new outbreaks. Just try not to think these little plants are cute like I did, that just makes it harder to control them!



Another useful new brochure from MSU Extension is called **Herbicides and Noxious Weeds: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**. This brochure gives an overview about herbicides, how and why they are used to control noxious weeds, and information about some of the questions and concerns people have about herbicides. The specific information and contacts are for Montana and not all the products and weeds are relevant to our area, but the general information applies very well and it's a great primer on herbicides. Both of these documents are available for free download from the MSU Extension publications website: http://store.msuextension.org/.

Take note: we have a new phone number

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program phone number is now **206-477-9333 (206-477-WEED)**. In addition, program staff all have new phone numbers. Email addresses, cell phone numbers and the website will remain the same. This change is part of a county-wide phone system upgrade that will significantly reduce cost and increase efficiency throughout county government offices. For a complete list of new program staff phone numbers, please see the county directory or email us at noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov.