

# KC Weed News – July 2011

## King County, Washington

(<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-news.aspx>)

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### Weed of the Month: [Policeman's Helmet \(\*Impatiens glandulifera\*\)](#), a [Class B Noxious Weed](#) in King County, Washington

Sometimes it's hard to know how an invasive plant first gets started, but the history is pretty clear for this lovely but pernicious annual. In 1839, seeds of *Impatiens glandulifera* were sent from their native home in western Himalaya to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, England. Within 15 years, populations had escaped and naturalized into the English countryside. By the 1900's, the plant was widespread throughout England and Ireland. Today, it is considered one of Great Britain's "Top 20" Alien Plants because of its abundance and distribution.

Policeman's helmet, also known as Himalayan balsam or poor man's orchid, continues to move into new parts of the world with the help of gardeners attracted by the pretty flowers and the naturalistic way it self-seeds in the garden and beyond. It is now naturalized in 31 countries on three continents (Europe, North America and Asia) and is rapidly expanding its range especially in Europe, Eastern Asia and North America. In our region, policeman's helmet is established in parts of western Washington and the lower Fraser Valley of British Columbia. In King County, we are fighting significant infestations in several areas including Miller Creek in the SeaTac/Burien/Normandy Park area, the Kelsey Creek-Lake Hills Connector area in Bellevue, Peasley Canyon in Auburn, Issaquah Creek south of Issaquah, Thornton Creek in north Seattle, the Mountain View Road area of Duvall, on Vashon Island and elsewhere.

Although this plant is only an annual, it can reach ten feet tall in shaded areas, shorter in sunny spots. Pretty pink-purple to white flowers are present from June to October (shaded plants flower later) and seeds set within 13 weeks after flowering. When the seed capsules mature, they split open and eject around 800 seeds as far as 20 feet away. The seeds travel along waterways, can germinate under water and are viable in the soil for at least two years.

Because of its shallow root system, policeman's helmet can be easily pulled. However, its stems will root and re-grow if left on the ground, so pulled stems should be crushed, and dried or piled on tarps to compost. At least two years of follow up monitoring is recommended to catch new plants germinating from the seeds in the soil.

Besides showing up near gardens, policeman's helmet has escaped into moist lowland forests, streamsides, and roadside thickets. No longer legal to sell in Washington State, policeman's helmet remains a favorite trading plant among gardeners, who often find themselves with numerous volunteers to share with their friends and neighbors (not a nice thing to do to your friends). This plant is a strong competitor and can reduce the fitness of native plant species and eventually replaces them in invaded sites. Left alone, this plant will continue to spread into riparian areas and to push out beneficial native plants.

Although quite distinctive when it flowers, [policeman's helmet \(\*Impatiens glandulifera\*\)](#) can be confused before it blooms with another weedy member of the touch-me-not family called [spotted jewelweed \(\*Impatiens capensis\*\)](#). Spotted jewelweed flowers are orange with reddish spots, scalloped leaf edges (instead of the regular, small teeth on policeman's helmet leaf edges), and is generally only a few feet tall. Until recently, spotted jewelweed was often confused with a native called western touch-me-not ([Impatiens noli-tangere](#)), which looks similar but has yellow flowers and is only found in the northernmost corner of western Washington. Spotted jewelweed is native to the eastern United States and was introduced here by gardeners and others beginning around 1950. Similar to policeman's helmet, spotted jewelweed can be quite weedy, especially in disturbed streamsides and other moist areas. However, policeman's helmet is much taller and dominates other plants much more than spotted jewelweed. Spotted jewelweed is a Weed of Concern in King County but is not a state noxious weed in Washington. Also, spotted jewelweed should not be removed without first getting a positive identification. There is a rare native found locally called [spurless jewelweed \(\*Impatiens ecalcarata\*\)](#) that closely resembles spotted jewelweed. It can only be distinguished when it is in flower, and that can be tricky due to the presence of hybrids between the two species. Native spurless jewelweed flowers don't have spurs and are not spotted.

[Policeman's helmet](#) is a state noxious weed that is regulated in King County, so property owners and public agencies are required to remove it from their property before it seeds. Now, before it seeds, is the best time to remove this plant, since it is easy to find and easy to pull. Once policeman's helmet has mature seeds on it, it is very hard to pull without spreading the seeds. Once mature, the seeds are ejected from the pods with amazing force (this is fascinating to experience, but please put a bag around the seed pods before trying it!). Also, stems will re-root and flower again if left on moist soil or piled up. Crush the stems completely before leaving them to rot, preferably on a tarp or paved area. Bagging and discarding the plants is another option. Please [report infestations](#) to us so we can survey the surrounding areas for new patches.

## Weed Tips for July

**Watch for giant, white, flat-topped flower clusters.** This month, [Giant hogweed](#) is fully in flower and starting to go to seed. We have found several new sites with flowering plants this year so keep your eyes out for these dramatic, tall plants in alleys, ravines or

even in your own backyard (if you are unlucky enough to have had it in the past). It takes hogweed many years to build up enough root energy to flower, so sometimes it escapes notice under blackberries or mixed in with other plants. Once it flowers though, it's hard to ignore since it usually towers overhead at 10 to 15 feet tall, with massive 3 to 5 feet wide leaves. You can check the [noxious weed map](#) for King County on our website to see if it has been seen in your area. [Report the location](#) if you find new hogweed infestations in King County.

Because of the danger of getting burns, removing hogweed when it is full grown is tricky. Make sure to wear rubber gloves and carefully cut down the flowering stem without getting the juice on you. Put the flower head in a sturdy plastic garbage bag and, if there are seeds, take care not to knock them off (hogweed seeds are amazingly good at germinating!). Then, dig up as much root as you can, at least 6 inches deep if possible. If there is a risk of anyone coming into contact with the plant, also place the roots and stems in a sturdy plastic bag and discard in your garbage. Please [contact our program](#) if you find this plant or need assistance removing it.

**Pull tansy ragwort before seeds form.** The good news is that [tansy ragwort](#) is becoming easier to find now with its bright yellow daisy flowers. The bad news is that seeds will follow soon and they will produce new ragwort plants for at least 16 more years. Also, once tansy ragwort is fully in flower, the flowering stems have enough energy in them to go to seed even if they are cut off or mowed. So, if your ragwort is already flowering, please pull it soon and bag it up for the garbage. We don't want this plant to get into commercial compost. Not only is it toxic to animals even when dry, but it is really good at spreading by seed and we don't want to take any chances. And, please don't mow your tansy ragwort unless there is no other option. At best mowing will only delay flowering for a few weeks or so, and at worst it will spread the plants even more. If you have a large amount of tansy ragwort to dispose of, you can call our office at 206-296-0290 for a voucher that will pay for noxious weed disposal at any King County transfer station.

**Act quickly to stop flowering weeds from going to seed.** Summer is finally here in full force and the weeds are doing what they do best – trying to spread! When weeds are flowering, it means there's no time to lose and it's also the easiest time to spot hard-to-find weeds.

- Noxious weeds that are flowering now include: [Dalmatian toadflax](#), [spotted knapweed](#), [meadow knapweed](#), [diffuse knapweed](#), [orange hawkweed](#), [yellow hawkweed](#), [sulfur cinquefoil](#), [giant hogweed](#), [tansy ragwort](#), [goatsrue](#), [policeman's helmet](#), [perennial pepperweed](#), [Spanish broom](#), [bull thistle](#) and [Canada thistle](#).
- Noxious weeds that are mostly going to seed now, but may still have some flowers in cooler spots include [garlic mustard](#), [milk thistle](#), [poison-hemlock](#), and [wild chervil](#).
- A few to look for a bit later in July or in August include [garden loosestrife](#), [purple loosestrife](#), [Brazilian elodea](#), [Phragmites](#), [knotweed](#), [bighead knapweed](#), [buffalobur](#) and [velvetleaf](#).

**Report [regulated Class A and B noxious weeds](#) on roads and trails.** County, city and state crews are all busy working on noxious weeds along roadsides, trails and parks. However, even with their hard work and our own efforts to send them locations of regulated noxious weeds, we can't be everywhere and some sites get missed. If you see a patch of tansy ragwort or any other regulated noxious weed growing on public land or a roadside, please contact our office and we will make sure the right agency or property owner gets notified quickly. We can be reached at 206-296-0290 or you can use our [online infestation report form](#).

**Please report all garlic mustard sites – even if you think we already know about it.** In addition to new sites on the Cedar River, we have also found a few new [garlic mustard](#) sites on Soos Creek in the Kent area. Although plants are now mostly seeding now or just in rosette form, it is important to keep looking and [reporting to us](#) when you find new infestations. It is going to be tough, but there is still an opportunity to keep this plant from becoming a widespread problem in King County.

### **Invasive Weed Workshop at Snoqualmie Library**

We are holding a workshop sponsored by the Snoqualmie Valley Master Gardener Plant Clinic on August 8 at 7 p.m. in the Snoqualmie Library. In this workshop, we will teach how to identify and manage invasive weeds plaguing the Snoqualmie area such as Scotch broom, blackberry, ivy and knotweed as well as newer invaders that are threatening to cause problems in the area, such as garlic mustard, hawkweed, the loosestrifes and more. The workshop is free and there is no need to register. For more information, contact Sasha Shaw at [sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov](mailto:sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov) or the [Snoqualmie Library](#) (see the [program details](#) on the library event calendar).

### **Knotweed Workshops in Snoqualmie/North Bend**

We will be holding two more workshops on knotweed control in July. We want to show what's involved in effectively getting this plant controlled and how and where to use different methods. It can be frustrating to keep trying to get rid of knotweed and not have it work, year after year. Hopefully we can help you figure out what to do that will work better. These workshops will be very hands on and interactive. We will also be providing specific training on using the knotweed stem injectors effectively. Participants in this training will be eligible to borrow our stem injectors for use on their own land.

The July 19 workshop will be an evening class and will cover knotweed biology and spread and all methods of control including stem-injection. The two sessions on July 20 will be a combination control demonstration and work party, where participants will get a chance to practice injecting actual knotweed in an infestation that we would like to control. These sessions will be limited to 25 people and pre-registration is required.

Although we have grant projects to help control knotweed on the upper reaches of some of the major rivers in the county, we don't have the resources to tackle knotweed everywhere. Our goal is to encourage and help more people begin to fight back against knotweed in order to reduce its impact on our natural resources.

The workshops are free and open to the public. Register online or contact Sasha Shaw <[sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov](mailto:sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov)> or Frances Lucero <[frances.lucero@kingcounty.gov](mailto:frances.lucero@kingcounty.gov)> for more information or call us at 206-296-0290. See our [website](#) for more details.

### **Knotweed Workshop Dates and Locations:**

- **July 19**, 7:00-8:30 pm, [Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center](#), 1711 Boalch Ave, North Bend, WA 98045
- **July 20<sup>th</sup>**, 9:00 am-12:00 pm OR 1:00-4:00 pm, hands-on treatment demonstration and work party at [Three Forks Natural Area](#) (between Snoqualmie and North Bend), two sessions (contact us for more information on meeting location and other logistics).

### **Aquatic Weed Management Symposium at the UW Botanic Gardens**

The UW Botanic Gardens is holding a symposium on July 13 that will feature the latest observations and expertise on aquatic weed management. Steve Manning, founder and president of [Invasive Plant Control, Inc.](#), will present economically and environmentally sound techniques for controlling invasive aquatic weeds. Also presenting will be King County Noxious Weed Specialist Katie Messick and representatives from the UW Botanic Gardens and Seattle Parks Department. The afternoon will be devoted to a kayak or walking tour (your choice) through Lake Washington's wetlands, one of garden loosestrife's primary haunts in this region. Designed for professional audiences, this symposium is open to everyone interested in aquatic weeds and their control.

#### **Managing Aquatic Weeds: Challenges and Opportunities**

**Wednesday, July 13, 9:00 AM-3:30 PM**

Graham Visitors Center, Washington Park Arboretum, 2300 Arboretum Dr. E, Seattle

Professional Credits: WSDA, WSNLA (pending)

Symposium with Kayak Tour, \$55; Symposium with Walking Tour, \$30

*Box lunch included when you register by July 10: 206-685-8033 or [online](#)*

### **Where to Find our Weed Info Booth in July and August**

You will be able to ask weed questions in person, check out live weed specimens, and pick up fact sheets and booklets at the following locations this July and August (check out our [complete schedule](#) online and if you have a community event that could use a booth on invasive and noxious weeds, please [contact us](#)):

- **July 7, North Bend Farmers Market**, Si View Community Center, North Bend
- **July 12, Carnation Farmers Market**, 3-7 pm, downtown Carnation
- **July 16-17, Vashon-Maury Island Strawberry Festival**, Vashon Island
- **July 22-23, Enumclaw Street Fair**, 9am-8pm both days, downtown Enumclaw
- **July 28, Bellevue Farmers Market**, 3-7pm, First Presbyterian Church of Bellevue, 1717 Bellevue Way NE
- **July 30, Redmond Farmers Market**, 9am-3pm, 7730 Leary Way NE, Redmond
- **July 31, Auburn International Farmers Market**, 10am-3pm, Auburn Station Plaza
- **August 13, Rock the Green Clean**, Middle Green River Coalition, Kanaskat State Park

### **Chervils on the Loose**

Late this spring, we discovered an abundance of the regulated Class B noxious weed called [wild chervil \(\*Anthriscus sylvestris\*\)](#) along Highway 410 near Enumclaw and in adjacent fields and county roads. This plant is mostly found on roadsides and disturbed areas, but is also an invader of open fields and pastures. As invasive as any noxious

weed, it also has the added bad luck to be a carrier of diseases that impact vegetable crops such as carrots. Before this year, we hadn't recorded any infestations of wild chervil in King County, although there have been reports of it occurring at the University of Washington.

A quick survey for this plant on the roads surrounding where it was discovered showed us that there is quite a lot in the area near Enumclaw, but it doesn't seem to occur beyond this part of King County. However, we would like to know if it is elsewhere and has just escaped our notice. Wild chervil is a member of the carrot/parsley plant family (*Apiaceae*) and closely resembles other plants in the family so identification can be tricky. Also, unfortunately, the best time to spot it is in late spring or early summer, since the plants are mostly going to seed now. However, it may be still in flower in some spots, so if you notice any wild chervil, please report it on our website or contact us for more information. There are many good websites with identification and control information including the [UW Burke Museum](#), [Sagebud.com](#), [Thurston County](#) and this excellent fact sheet from Iceland:

[http://www.nobanis.org/files/factsheets/Anthriscus\\_sylvestris.pdf](http://www.nobanis.org/files/factsheets/Anthriscus_sylvestris.pdf).

Coincidentally, we recently discovered that we may also have the misfortune to have another non-native, invasive chervil on the loose in our county. A landowner on Vashon first brought this plant to our attention and we have tentatively identified it as rough chervil (*Chaerophyllum temulum*), but we won't know for sure until botanists examine the plants with mature seeds, which will allow for a definite ID. Whatever this plant turns out to be, it was also observed along the road to Cougar Mountain and elsewhere in eastern King County. Given how this plant has behaved on the property on Vashon and near Cougar Mountain, we know that it is capable of spreading into the woods, and is quite dominating along disturbed areas like roads and driveways. There is less information online on this plant because it was not known to occur in this part of the United States. I found the following sites to be most helpful: <http://www.sagebud.com/rough-chervil-chaerophyllum-temulum/>, [http://www.aphotoflora.com/d\\_chaerophyllum\\_temulum\\_rough\\_chervil.html](http://www.aphotoflora.com/d_chaerophyllum_temulum_rough_chervil.html) <http://www.bioimages.org.uk/html/t48880.htm>

### **New Study Evaluates the Economics of Weed Management**

The recent [Center for Invasive Plant Management newsletter](#) is chock full of great information, including a report on a [new study](#) that aims to understand the economics of various weed management choices. Some of the conclusions aren't surprising. For instance, it's cheaper to control a weed early before it gets widespread. However, it is very helpful to have research that backs up our experiences in the field. One important take home message from the study is that it is more fiscally responsible to be consistent year to year in our weed management practices. According to the report, "Delaying treatment or applying it inconsistently leads to greater invasion down the road and a sharp decline in long-term economic benefits." Unfortunately with today's budget crises, many local agencies and property owners are struggling to keep up with weed management along with other maintenance activities. This study is very timely in reminding us of the importance of protecting our investments of past weed control by at least maintaining the previous level of work, even if limited resources keep us from taking on new areas. It also helps guide our work toward the most cost-effective strategies and targets. In short, the study suggests that it is most cost-effective to direct our work to the least-infested areas first and generally focus on early detection and control of the newest, least common invaders. Sound advice!

## Changes for our Southwest King County Weed Specialist

Lexine Long, our noxious weed specialist since 2009 for the southwest part of the county, will be leaving our program this month to begin a dual-masters program at Utah State University in Watershed Sciences and Bioregional Planning. She won't be leaving weeds behind though – she's doing her project for both degrees on [Phragmites](#) on the Great Salt Lake. We are very proud of her work here and excited to see the results of her new projects, but Lexine will also be greatly missed. Fortunately for us, Edward McFarlin will be taking over Lexine's route for the rest of the season. Ed has been a field technician with our program the past two seasons working on our knotweed and garlic mustard projects and is very experienced with noxious weeds and our program's work. Ed can be contacted by email at [Edward.McFarlin@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Edward.McFarlin@kingcounty.gov) or by phone at 206-296-0290.

## Recent "Weeds in the News" Stories

It's knotweed season again and the SnoValley Star did a great job reporting on our river projects on the upper forks of the Snoqualmie River:

- [County leads fight against foreign invaders on Snoqualmie River.](#)

Summer also means it's time for [giant hogweed](#) news from around the country (and other countries) with some great headlines:

- [Summer plant from hell: giant hogweed can burn, scar and blind you](#)
- [Giant weed can cause blisters, even blindness](#)
- [Beware, giant hogweed is in full bloom](#)
- [Giant hogweed gone wild along Thames](#)
- [Giant hogweed invades NY! This weed can burn you, but probably won't eat you.](#)
- [Invasion of green giant sparks war on weeds](#)
- [Region losing battle against invasive weed](#) (this story is depressing!)

Often mistaken for giant hogweed, [poison-hemlock](#) also poses a serious health risk, as described well by this article:

- [Misidentification of poison-hemlock can be deadly](#)

The Washington State Weed Board is in the process of considering proposals for new weeds and one proposal is generating a lot of controversy in some circles:

- [Latest invasive weed not following usual script](#)

If I missed your favorite story on weeds, let me know. There are so many good stories this time of year and it's always interesting to read how different areas of the world are being impacted and how they are dealing with invasive and noxious weeds.