

KC Weed News – March 2009

King County, Washington

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

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Butterfly bush seed heads in March – ready to disperse

Weed of the Month: [Butterfly Bush](#) (*Buddleia davidii*) – Class B Non-Regulated Noxious Weed

Butterfly bush is arguably the most controversial plant on Washington's noxious weed list. Even some people who fully understand how invasive this plant is still can't bring themselves to uproot their prize garden specimens. Without a doubt, this Chinese shrub offers gardeners many benefits. Besides feeding adult butterflies with its abundant nectar throughout the summer and early fall, butterfly bush requires almost no water, insecticides, or fertilizer to keep it healthy and productive. These qualities combined with its tough, indestructible nature have made butterfly bush a huge favorite among northwest gardeners. So why is butterfly bush on the noxious weed list, you may ask?

Many of the qualities that make butterfly bush such a durable garden plant also make it a serious problem in nature. In its native range, butterfly bush is adapted to colonizing new areas, such as river banks disturbed by floods, and rapidly forming mature, seeding stands that can resist invasion by other fast-growing plants. Its ability to grow in low-nutrient, low-moisture soil makes it perfectly suited for colonizing sandy river banks. Its resistance to garden insects also makes it poor habitat for the caterpillars and other critters needed in nature to sustain the food chain. This is especially true on our rivers where insects feeding on native shrubs and trees fall into the water to feed salmon and other fish. In fact, one of the impacts of butterfly bush on rivers is to crowd out the willows that are such good habitat for many of our native butterflies. Unlike butterfly bush, willows provide food for both the larvae and the mature butterflies.

If you have butterfly bush growing in your garden, you may not have noticed any seedlings. Does that mean your plant is safe and not spreading? Unfortunately, it does not. Butterfly bush seeds are small and dispersed by wind for many miles from the parent plant. These are colonizers after all, looking for new territory to take over. Also, butterfly bush seems to germinate best in well-drained, open areas, not in nice, rich garden soil with lots of other plants to compete with. You only have to look along the roadsides in King County to see how

successful butterfly bush is in spreading to new areas. Because butterfly bush mostly spreads by seed (it also spreads somewhat by layering and sprouting from fallen branches), you can stop your butterfly bush from spreading out of your garden by cutting off the flower stalks in the fall. The seeds usually disperse over the winter and in the spring, so cut the flowers in the fall, don't wait until your spring garden clean up.

In Oregon, it is now against the law to sell butterfly bush, including the species *Buddleia davidii* and all of its many cultivars. Although some cultivars produce less seed, they all produce enough seed to spread. Oregon feels that the threat to natural resources overwhelms any benefits gained by using this plant in gardens. In Washington State, butterfly bush is a Class B noxious weed and control is required only in a few counties (see [the Washington State Noxious Weed Board weed list](#) for details) and the [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) has not put butterfly bush on the prohibited plants list that regulates what nurseries can sell. In King County, control of butterfly bush is not required (largely because it has already become too established to remove it all), but removal is definitely encouraged whenever possible.

This means that in King County it is up to everyone to voluntarily do the right thing. The impact of this plant along our rivers is serious and it is a growing threat. Removing butterfly bush from natural areas once it is established is very costly and may not be possible in some remote areas. So we ask everyone to consider using other garden plants (see the [Garden Wise brochure](#) for suggestions) and to remove those that you already have in the garden. If this is just too hard, simply remove the fading blooms at the end of the season to stop it from spreading. For more information about butterfly bush, see our [web page](#) and follow the links for additional resources.

Weed Tips for March

Check pastures for toxic weeds. Animals will be more likely to graze poisonous plants if the grasses are still too short or sparse, so check fields before setting animals out. Look for rosettes of [tansy ragwort](#), [milk thistle](#), and [poison-hemlock](#) and control them before letting the animals graze. For information on other poisonous pasture plants, contact your local extension office or conservation district. A handy summary of poisonous plants in western Washington can be found on our [brochures page](#).

Watch out for [giant hogweed](#) in urban areas, parks, and anywhere else it has been spotted in the past. Check the [noxious weed map](#) for King County to see if it has been seen in your area. Hogweed's large, jagged leaves and thick, purple-blotched stems should be tall enough to spot emerging above most other plants now and the plants will be easier to manage before they get full grown. Look for small seedlings and immature plants around the more obvious mature plants but be sure not to confuse non-native giant hogweed with similar native species [cow parsnip](#) and [coltsfoot](#), also about the same size right now. Digging up hogweed this time of year isn't too difficult, but be sure to use caution to avoid getting the sap on your skin because it can cause painful blisters and scarring. [Contact our program](#) if you find this plant in a new location in the county.

It's garlic mustard time. [Garlic mustard](#) rosettes have been waiting all winter for their March growth spurt and will be flowering before you know it. If you had garlic mustard last year, go back to the same places and look for rosettes now to plan how to control them. Be sure to [contact our program](#) if you find any new populations of garlic mustard or if you would like help planning your control work for the year!

Fix trouble spots before the weeds take over. Disturbed areas in lawns, pastures, woods, and other places will fill in with seedlings of annual and biennial weeds like [herb Robert](#) and [bull thistle](#). Spreading perennials like [Canada thistle](#) and [spotted knapweed](#) will move in quickly as well. Walk trails, fields and yards to spot trouble areas that will need re-seeding or mulch to keep back weeds.

Look for [bindweed](#) (morning glory) now while it is still small. Do you remember where bindweed was covering fences and plants last year? If you look around the same area, you will undoubtedly see small new stems coming up. Pulling these now will be much easier than after they wind themselves around your garden plants and everything else in their way. Also, if you can apply cardboard with wood chips on top over the area that will weaken the bindweed and you will be able to pull it up much more easily later in the summer. Remember, this plant can sprout from stem fragments, so gather the stems and dispose in yard waste.

Sign up Now for King County Noxious Weed Workshops

We are taking registrations for our annual noxious weed workshops for vegetation management crews and others who need to identify and manage noxious weeds. Session dates are May 6 and May 13. Topics this year include updates and refreshers on identifying and controlling priority noxious weeds, a presentation by Jeff Britt from WSDA on the “Keys to Legal Pesticide Applications and Record Keeping”, updates on using biocontrol in the county, and a special training session on using stem-injection guns to control knotweed. Participants in the stem-injection training can apply to borrow stem-injectors from the noxious weed program for controlling knotweed in their own projects. (By the way, for those of you just interested in knotweed stem-injection training, we will also be offering evening knotweed control workshops in June and July for county residents). The full agenda is on our [workshops page](#). Both classes are free and open to the public but space is limited. WSDA pesticide license recertification credits have been requested for these classes (4 credits requested). Register at 206-263-6468 or sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov. Please provide the name(s), agency or company, phone number and email.

South Session: Wednesday, **May 6**, 8 am to 12 pm, [City of Kent Shops Building](#), upstairs meeting room, 5821 W. James St., Kent, WA 98032

North Session: Wednesday, **May 13**, 8 am to 12 pm, [Northshore Utility District](#), Northshore Room, 6830 NE 185th St., Kenmore, WA 98028

Progress Report for Noxious Weed Control in King County: 2008 Annual Report

As we begin our work for the 2009 season, it is an important time to reflect on our progress and performance in the previous season. We welcome our partners and the citizens of King County to join us in reviewing our progress to date in order to be sure we are on the right track and making the best use of the public investment in our program. The King County Noxious Weed Control Board 2008 Annual Report summarizes our work and analyzes the performance measures we use to track our progress toward our goals and mission. We welcome your review of this work and any input you have for how we can work effectively towards our mission to minimize the impacts of noxious weeds to the environment, recreation, public health and the economy. We are pleased with the effectiveness of our work program and feel optimistic about our ability to continue making progress towards this mission. The Annual Report and its appendices are [available online](#). To request a printed copy of the annual report, contact our office at 206-296-0290 or noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov.

Staff News – Meet the 2009 Weed Crew

The 2009 weed season has begun and the [King County Noxious Weed Program](#) is fully staffed once again. Our seasonal regional weed specialists will be heading out to the field starting this month to track down high priority Class A and B noxious weeds and to work with landowners and property managers to get these problem plants controlled. Each specialist is assigned a region of the county that includes both incorporated and unincorporated areas (see the region maps on our [program information web page](#)). Our program is very fortunate to have a crew of highly motivated weed specialists who enjoy talking to people and helping them to find answers to their noxious weed problems.

1. **Karen Peterson:** North and Central Seattle, Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Bothell, Woodinville
2. **Frances Lucero:** Kirkland, Redmond, Duvall, Skykomish, Baring
3. **Ben Peterson:** Mercer Island, Bellevue, Issaquah, Sammamish, Carnation, Fall City, Medina, Hunts Point, Yarrow Point, Clyde Hill, Newcastle, Renton, Tukwila
4. **Maria Winkler:** West and South Seattle, Harbor Island, Vashon-Maury Island
5. **Lexine Long:** Burien, SeaTac, Normandy Park, Des Moines, Federal Way, western Kent, Milton
6. **Kimiora Ward:** Snoqualmie, North Bend
7. **Matt Below:** eastern Kent, Covington, Maple Valley, Black Diamond
8. **Trish MacLaren:** Auburn, Algona, Pacific, Enumclaw

In addition to the seasonal weed specialists, we are also fortunate to have several full time (or almost full time) weed specialists and other staff to keep our program working year round.

1. **Steve Burke,** Program Manager
2. **Suzanne Rowe,** Administrative Specialist
3. **Sasha Shaw,** Educational Specialist
4. **Roy Brunskill,** King County Lands and Roads Coordinator
5. **Dennis Chambreau,** State and Federal Lands Coordinator and GIS Lead
6. **Katie Messick,** Aquatic Weed Specialist
7. **Monica Walker,** Riparian Weed Specialist and Knotweed Project Manager

If you would like to meet your regional weed specialist or any of our other staff, please do not hesitate to call our program at 206-296-0290 or send us an email at noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov.

Wilderness Hay Certification Program Coming to King County

In 2008, the Washington State Noxious Weed Board started a pilot program called Washington Wilderness Hay and Mulch (WWHAM) for certifying hay and straw according to North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) standards for weed-free hay. A big motivation for this program was the Forest Service requirement to only use weed-free certified hay and mulch on forest lands in the Pacific Northwest (for more information on this see the [Forest Service FAQ page](#): <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/weeds/weed-free/4-Weed-Free-Q-A-final-2007.pdf>).

Although it is also allowable to use pellets for feeding backcountry horses and other livestock, if you prefer to use hay, you have to find a source for certified material. Short of driving to Montana or parts of Oregon, backcountry riders had few options. After working with Washington hay growers and other stakeholders, the Washington State Weed Board developed a set of standards and protocols for counties to begin certifying hay fields.

The WWHAM program meets the NAWMA standards as well as the forest service requirements for weed-free hay and mulch. Several counties began certifying fields in 2008 and that number is expected to increase in 2009. It is likely that the demand for certified hay will increase as word gets out about this program. There are answers to many questions about the WWHAM program on the [Washington State Noxious Weed Board website](#). If you are interested in obtaining WWHAM-certified hay and mulch, there is a list of growers who had hay certified and there is a Frequently Asked Questions page and a WWHAM brochures that will answer many of your questions.

Although there are currently no hay growers in King County that have certified hay, we are working to implement a King County certification program this year. If you are interested in finding out more about getting hay certified, contact Sasha Shaw at 206-296-0290 or [by email](#). Since fields need to be certified before they are cut, it is important to get the ball rolling as soon as possible if you are interested in this program.

Public Invited to Provide Feedback on King County's Stormwater Management Program

King County residents can provide feedback on local stormwater management practices and learn more about planned updates to the county's stormwater management program at a series of upcoming public meetings. This effort is part of King County's ongoing commitment to protect public health and improve environmental conditions in our local streams, rivers and Puget Sound.

The Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) has identified stormwater as a significant contributor to reduced water quality in Puget Sound, which is targeted for clean up by a new state agency, the Puget Sound Partnership.

As part of the clean-up strategy for Puget Sound, DOE used its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting authority to issue strict new stormwater permits to municipalities. King County has developed a stormwater management program to meet the requirements of this new permit. The program will be reviewed and updated annually, providing the public with an ongoing opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions about the program's development and implementation. The new 2009 Stormwater Management Program document, which outlines what King County will do in 2009 to comply with the permit, is [posted online](#) for review.

Upcoming Public Meetings:

March 5, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., [Covington Library](#), 27100 164th Ave. S.E., Covington
March 9, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., [Redmond City Hall](#), Council Chambers, 15670 NE 85th Street, Redmond

For more information and to participate, please visit:

- [King County Stormwater Services Web site](#)
- [King County's 2008 Stormwater Management Program document](#)
- [Answers to frequently asked questions](#)
- [King County's Municipal NPDES Stormwater Permit](#) (DOE Web site)

Three ways to comment:

Members of the public can provide comments on the program at the public meetings, via e-mail at stormwater@kingcounty.gov, or through the U.S. mail by sending comments to:

Stormwater Management Team, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, 201 S. Jackson St., Suite 600, Seattle, WA 98104.

Public comment on the program will be accepted through March 13.

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Argues for Benefits of using Herbicides to Control Invasive Plants

In a wildlife refuge, the environmental impact of any action is of the utmost importance. When faced with a challenge to their use of herbicides to control invasive plants such as [orange hawkweed](#), staff from the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge argued that: “if we were unable to control the invasive plants, it would be worse for the environment than limited applications of an herbicide to eliminate these invasive species.” The whole article is available online from the [Kodiak Daily Mirror](#) at <http://www.kodiakdailymirror.com/?pid=19&id=7317>. This debate between the impacts of herbicide on the environment and the impacts of not using them to control invasive plants when other methods are ineffective or too expensive is a common one throughout the country, including in King County. It is not an easy debate, but it is important to remember the impacts of all our actions, including doing nothing to stop the tide of invasive plants into our wilderness and conservation lands, and to thoughtfully weigh the costs and benefits of all options.

Debate over Stimulus Spending Priorities in the National Park Service – Should it Include Invasive Plant Management?

The New York Times recently reported on a debate over how to spend the large infusion of stimulus money coming to the National Park Service ([Debate over economic stimulus priorities hits Park Service](#)). Interestingly, the control of invasive species was not first on the list of possible projects and may not be considered at all. The focus seems to be more on infrastructure and structure maintenance. This is short-sighted considering the vast wealth of natural resources in our national parks and the seriousness of the threat of invasive species to this resource. As an invasive species expert at the NPS explains, “no more than 3 percent of the 2.7 million acres of Park Service land infested by invasive plants is being treated”. Invasive species removal is certainly “shovel ready” and labor-intensive and would be easy to get started quickly. Other federal agencies will be going through a similar debate and I hope that they will see the potential benefits of focusing on invasive plant management, both for the potential to get many people to work and for the benefits to our national treasures.