

# KC Weed News – October 2010

King County, Washington

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

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## Weed of the Month: [Old Man's Beard](#) (*Clematis vitalba*), [Class C Noxious Weed](#) in King County, Washington

When I talk with people around here about noxious weeds, many express relief that we don't have [kudzu](#) (a.k.a the vine that ate the south) in Washington State. I share that relief, but in some local greenspaces it almost looks like we do have kudzu. If you look around the Seattle area this time of year, it is hard not to notice the fluffy, round flower clusters of [old man's beard](#) (*Clematis vitalba*) festooning the branches of numerous trees, bushes and hillsides. This deciduous vine escapes notice much of the year and it's possible you haven't noticed it before.

However, this very successful invasive vine is probably second only to [English ivy](#) in its threat to the health of our trees. This is especially true of deciduous trees like the majestic maples and cottonwoods lining the Snoqualmie River, where you can see extensive stands of trees covered with old man's beard. Or spend some time in the greenspaces of many neighborhoods in Seattle, Tukwila or other cities along the I-5 corridor, and you will start to see the damage old man's beard is capable of causing.

Last month I received an email on this plant from Bruce Clark, a resident of the Queen Anne neighborhood in Seattle, who was very concerned that we weren't taking its threat seriously enough. Bruce wrote:

I was recently perusing the KC noxious weed website, which I like a lot, and was reminded how bizarre I find it that neither English/Atlantic Ivy nor *Clematis vitalba* are regulated noxious weeds. I'm in my 50's and have lived in Seattle all my life. When I

was a kid ivy was no problem and Old Man's Beard was not seen in greenbelts. Now the two are the twin pillars of Seattle's greenbelt noxious weed incubator. I live on Queen Anne and if you walk properties anywhere near the greenbelt you will find Cv and/or English Ivy in virtually every yard. I appreciate that noxious weeds are of special concern to ranchers and those for whom such weeds can pose a real threat to farming and ranching, but in King County and certainly Seattle, ivy and Cv are enormous problems. Among other things they actively degrade the tree canopy and are consuming increasing control resources.

I have heard similar observations from many folks who are part of the armies of volunteers and conservation crews battling invasive weeds throughout Seattle and other local cities. This is understandable considering that this vine, the only really invasive ornamental *Clematis* species we have around here, is a prolific seeder and an aggressive competitor. Like English ivy, old man's beard winds around tree trunks and grows up high and out of reach into the forest canopy. Its masses of fluffy white seeds can be seen blowing around in fall and winter, spreading far and wide. When the vines topple trees under their weight, the plant carpets the ground with dense growth that inhibits tree seedlings, preventing natural forest regeneration.

The plant's multi-stemmed growth also makes removal a major chore. Old man's beard vines climb up and down everything in their way, rooting wherever they touch soil, making hand removal frustrating and laborious. Also, like ivy, old man's beard's vines grow thicker and thicker over time, eventually forming stout woody vines that can only be cut with a sturdy saw. Even worse, the stem cuttings left behind will take root and make new plants, and new stems will soon grow from any roots left behind. I have heard Seattle Parks gardeners complain that this plant is one of the hardest to control because, even after all that work, it just comes back for more. Certainly this would be a good plant to find and remove before it gets established.

After reading this, you may be concerned that the innocent looking *Clematis* on your fence is instead this terror of an invasive weed. First, if it has flowers that are not creamy white, or it blooms in the spring, or has leaves that are evergreen, don't worry. Second, if it struggles to survive and needs pampering to grow well, I wouldn't be too concerned. Old man's beard does very well all on its own here. However, if your *Clematis* looks just like the massive tangles of vines covering a nearby greenspace, then you might want to take some speedy, remedial action.

Old man's beard has opposite "leaves" that are divided into groups of 5 oval leaflets (sometimes 3 on new growth), often at least a little bit coarsely toothed on the edges in our local populations, but can be smooth as well. The flowers come in clusters near the tops of the branches and have 4 narrow white "petals" (technically called sepals) and lots of stamens and pistils protruding from the center of the flowers. In the fall, the flowers turn into fluffy balls of gray-white seeds that hang off branches like an old man's beard. As the leaves drop off in late fall, all that remains is the skeleton of old stems and the fluffy round bundles of seeds that sometimes hang on well into the winter months.

This plant is on the noxious weed list for Washington because of its potential harm to natural resources. However, it is non-regulated in King County. What this means is that there is simply too much of it for mandatory control to be feasible. However, because of the impact to trees and natural habitats, removing this plant should be a high priority for anyone, especially in forests and along rivers, where it can degrade the health and regeneration of the native trees. Also, old man's beard is mostly limited to the Snoqualmie Valley and the cities along I-5. So if

you notice this plant growing outside of that area, controlling it before it spreads would be a huge benefit to your area.

At this point, we aren't tracking locations of old man's beard in King County except in the [Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley](#) and the wilderness areas of the Cascades. If you see old man's beard in these remote areas, please report it on our [online infestation form](#). For other areas, I encourage you to contact your local parks department and see if there are any work parties planned where you can volunteer to help remove this and other invasive weeds. If you have any questions about identification or control, please see our [website](#) or contact us at 206-296-0290 or [noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov](mailto:noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov).

## Weed Tips for October

**Be on the alert for garlic mustard; new populations were found on the Cedar River.** There are probably more populations out there that we are missing, so be sure to keep an eye out for this hard-to-find weed. [Garlic mustard](#) is usually a couple of feet tall or so when it is flowering, with clusters of small white, 4-petaled blooms on top of leafy stems. The seed pods are long and narrow, start out green and turn light brown when they mature. The young rosettes have kidney-shaped leaves that are not noticeably fuzzy or hairy and tend to be somewhat purplish as the weather cools down. The leaf edges are scalloped or coarsely toothed and the leaf shape becomes more triangular as you move up the stem. When you pull the plant, the root has a noticeable s-curve in it and the plant smells like garlic. If you see any garlic mustard, please report it right away. If you are unsure, you can [email us](#) a photo and we'll check it out.

**Look for unusual weeds popping up this fall: velvetleaf and buffalo bur.** We usually find a few of these two Class A noxious weeds in the fall (and this year is no different). These summer annuals tend to show up around farmyards or, in the case of buffalo bur, around bird feeders, and fall or late summer is the best time to spot them. [Velvetleaf](#) is a very tall, softly hairy, weed with pretty yellow "mallow" type flowers. [Buffalobur](#) is a spiny, ball-shaped weed with yellow flowers that look like those on a tomato plant and leaves that look like really spiny oak leaves. Both are easy to pull and get rid of when you find one or two, but both also become huge headaches if they are left to spread. Since both are [Class A weeds](#) in Washington, we'd really like to know where they are, so be sure to [report the location](#) if you see any of either plant.

**Our cool, wet summer means lots of weeds are still going strong.** Weeds that usually dry up and stop growing in the summer are still doing fine this year. Also, the extra water and mild temperatures means lots of weed seedlings are germinating. Look now for late flowering and germinating weeds, especially biennials and winter annuals. Some noxious weeds that are still growing well right now and/or making lots of new seedlings include: [tansy ragwort](#), [spotted knapweed](#), [garlic mustard](#), [hawkweed](#), [milk thistle](#) and even [giant hogweed](#).

**Look for re-flowering tansy ragwort where earlier it was mowed or munched by cinnabar caterpillars.** The cute little [cinnabar caterpillars](#) do a great job munching off the leaves of [tansy ragwort](#), but they don't kill the plants. After our wetter than usual summer and the fall rains, the plants are now recovering. We have recently seen flowers on recovering tansy ragwort, so it's time to go out and remove them before they go to seed. Mowed tansy ragwort is also re-growing and flowering. Look for shorter than usual plants with yellow flowers wherever you mowed it earlier this year. Fortunately, hand-pulling should be pretty easy now because of all the moisture we've had.

**Think native plants for filling in those holes you made removing invasive plants this summer.** Fall is a great time to plant trees and shrubs because they have the whole rainy season to grow new roots before next year's dry summer months. There are so many great plants to choose from that are native to Washington and you can feel good that you won't be introducing any new invasive plants. Native plants also have the added bonus of being well-adapted to our climate and soils, so they won't need a lot of pampering to keep them growing well. For more information, check out the [Native Plant Guide](#) or contact the [Washington Native Plant Society](#).

**Controlling weeds isn't just a summer activity; fall works great for many weeds.** Manual control (you know, pulling, digging, etc.), is even easier when the soil is moist. Not only is it easier to get the weeds out of the ground, if you do accidentally remove plants you want to keep, you can re-plant them with less harm done, since they are more or less dormant. If you do go digging, however, make sure you aren't working in really wet soils, because this can cause compaction (not to mention causing a big muddy mess). Also, chemical control actually works better on some plants like [English ivy](#) in the fall or winter (if you can find a window of dry, mild weather), and is less likely to harm native plants, which are mostly dormant. Fall treatment can also be beneficial in reducing many perennial and biennial weeds such as [knapweed](#), [thistles](#), [sulfur cinquefoil](#), [tansy ragwort](#) and [hawkweed](#). For invasive trees and shrubs, there are cut stump and basal treatment options that can be done anytime it isn't raining or snowing.

**Remove weedy vines from trees.** Look around for [English ivy](#) and [old man's beard](#) (wild clematis) draping over the limbs of your trees. Mature ivy branches are busily making little umbrella clusters of green flowers now that will be followed by berries in the winter and spring. Old man's beard is starting to go to seed, so it should be easy to spot with its puffy white clusters of seeds high up in the trees and on hillsides. Trace the vines to the ground and pull up the roots or at least separate the roots from the upper growth. Clear trunks of all strands of ivy and clematis up to chest height and then let the upper stems die back. Remove as much of the root as possible, especially near the base of the trees, to stop the vines from growing back up the trunks.

### **Bad News: It was the Perfect Summer for Milk Thistle**

The cool, moist summer of 2010 resulted in "perfect storm" conditions for [milk thistle](#) seedling germination. During our fall treatments, we found milk thistle seedlings sprouting in areas where they haven't been seen for several years. In addition to the wet summer, this is likely due, in part, to micro-site erosion exposing viable seeds in the seed bank with additional help from Townsend's moles excavating seed laden soil to the surface of their mounds. Ongoing disturbance from farming activities and livestock movements also contributed to the increases in fall germination. According to the literature, milk thistle seeds are viable for "at least nine years" and possible longer. This really points out the need for persistence in order to completely rid an area of a noxious weed like milk thistle. Even several years after you haven't seen any weeds on a site, go back and look around. It can take a few years for seeds buried in the soil to work back up to the surface, but it won't take long for milk thistle or other noxious weeds to take over again if you don't keep on top of it. If you have milk thistle or other worrisome noxious weeds, give us a call at 206-296-0290 or [email us](#) and we can help you figure out what to do.

### **Trail Weed Watchers Tell Weeds to Take a Hike**

The volunteers in the [Trail Weed Watcher program](#) worked hard this summer searching for invasive weeds on 29 different trails and other remote areas of the Alpine Lakes, Middle Fork Snoqualmie, and the South Fork Snoqualmie. There were 20 active Weed Watcher volunteers

who volunteered 360 hours this summer. After hiking and watching for invasive weeds, the volunteers filled out detailed reports on each trail with weed name, location, area covered and so forth. Several of the volunteers went above and beyond and also controlled weeds that they found. Overall in 2010, the Weed Watcher volunteers surveyed 67 miles on Forest Service land, 48 miles on DNR land and 2 miles on State Parks, or a grand total of 117 miles in the recreation and wilderness areas east of North Bend to the Cascade Crest.

The Trail Weed Watcher program is a joint effort of the King County Noxious Weed Program, the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington Department of Natural Resources and Mountains to Sound Greenway. We train hikers and plant enthusiasts in weed identification and survey methodology and then ask that they track priority weed species on trails and campgrounds in the mountains and riversides east of North Bend. The goal of the program is to detect new and encroaching populations of invasive weeds in wilderness areas while control is still feasible. The Weed Watchers choose where they want to hike and then report back on where they found invasive plants and whether they were able to remove them. The Weed Watchers survey trails throughout the project area regardless of jurisdiction, including lands managed by the Forest Service, State DNR, King County, State Parks and local cities. So far, the project has focused efforts on the trails of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Mt. Si area, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and the I-90 corridor trails of the South Fork Snoqualmie. For more information on the project, contact [Sasha Shaw](#) at 206-263-6468 or check out our [website](#).

### **Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to the State Noxious Weed List**

The [Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board](#) is holding a public hearing from 12 pm to 2 pm on Tuesday, Nov. 2 at the Yakima County Public Works Maintenance & Operations Complex at 1216 S. 18<sup>th</sup> St, Yakima, WA 98901. This public hearing and the board meeting the following day are the final steps in the annual review process for the state's noxious weed list. It is also the opportunity for the public to weigh in on the changes being considered for next year's weed list, including one possible new species on the list and several changes to the status of weeds already on the list. Here is an excerpt from the State Weed Board's news release on the hearing:

The Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB) will consider rule changes on three topics at a November 2 public hearing based on several proposals that were submitted by county noxious weed control boards. These proposed rule changes would

- add [English holly](#) to the Class C list of noxious weeds,
- change two Class C noxious weeds to Class B noxious weeds ([yellow archangel](#) and [hairy willow herb](#)), and
- change the areas designated for control of three Class B noxious weeds ([hoary alyssum](#), [Eurasian watermilfoil](#), and [houndstongue](#)).

The purpose of the public hearing is to solicit citizen comments and opinions about the proposed rule changes.

Those who wish to comment on the proposed changes may do so orally at the public hearing, or by submitting written testimony, which can be emailed to [noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov](mailto:noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov) or mailed to WSNWCB, PO Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504. Written testimony must arrive no later than 5 pm Monday, Nov. 1. Testimony that has already been submitted to the State Noxious Weed Control Board this year will be presented at this hearing.

The Board will vote on the proposed rule changes during its regular meeting, which begins at 8:30 on Wednesday, Nov. 3, in the same location as the hearing. This meeting is also open to the public.

The Washington State noxious weed list is updated every year, and all Washington residents can submit proposals to add or remove species, change the class of a listed noxious weed, or to change the designated area in which control is required for a Class B noxious weed. Anyone, including citizens, tribes, organizations, government agencies, and county noxious weed control boards, may participate in the listing process by submitting a proposal or by submitting testimony about proposed changes to the noxious weed list.

For further information about the listing proposals and how you testify at the hearing, please go to [http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/proposed\\_changes\\_2011.htm](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/proposed_changes_2011.htm).

### **WA State Weed Association Conference in Yakima November 3 to 5**

The 60th Annual Weed Conference will be held November 3 to 5 in Yakima (that's right, this conference has been held for 60 years – get your t-shirt for this one!). This is Washington's main weed conference for crops, turf, ornamental landscapes, and vegetation management. The conference website is <http://www.weedconference.org>. This is a good conference for people in the field of weed control and/or vegetation management and those seeking to continue their education and get recertification credits for their pesticide licenses. Register by October 29 to get early registration rates and don't forget to enter the Photo Contest for cash prizes and instant fame. Here are a few topics that should be of interest to those of us doing weed control in King County:

- Writing successful grants
- The nuts and bolts of biological control
- How herbicides are broken down in plants
- Recent updates and environmental protection agency proposals for 2, 4-D
- What's new with noxious weeds
- Agricultural herbicides and water: what's going on in Washington
- Update on product line of algaecides and herbicides for irrigation canals, ponds, and lakes
- Noxious weed spraying and permitting process for aquatic applications
- Aquatic weed control in small ponds and lakes
- Federal & state land management agencies: long range weed management
- Balancing herbicide/non-herbicide control of weeds in a community of concerned citizens
- And many other topics (see [conference schedule](#) online)

### **Seattle Residents Team Up to Help Local Parks on “Green Seattle Day” November 6**

Every weekend of the year, there are work parties at parks all over Seattle where local community members volunteer to fight back against invasive weeds and to protect and restore the urban forests that make Seattle so green. If these regular work parties are the main dish of the work to restore Seattle's parks, you could think of Green Seattle Day as the dessert. This is the fun day, when large groups of people get together and plant amazing numbers of trees and other plants and generally get a ton done and have a blast doing it. It is very rewarding to get out in your local park and work alongside your neighbors any day, but doing it on Green Seattle

Day feels especially great because you are part of a huge citywide effort. For more information and a long list of parks that are hosting work parties on November 6, check out the [Green Seattle website](#).

### **Regional Weed Science Conference Coming to Spokane in 2011**

Mark your calendars for a trip to Spokane in early March next year. The [Western Society of Weed Science](#) (WSWS) meeting will be held in Spokane at the Doubletree City Center Hotel on March 7-10, 2011. This regional conference rotates through the western states and is often too far from here for easy travel (last year it was in Hawaii for instance), so this is a good opportunity for Washington and Oregon residents. At this annual meeting, weed science researchers from all over the western states will be presenting on a wide range of topics, including a section on Rangeland and Natural Areas that covers invasive weeds and restoration techniques. There is also a special symposium being organized by Shawna Bautista and Tim Harrington from the US Forest Service, called "Ecological Effects of Invasive Plants" that sounds especially interesting. You can register separately for the symposium, which will be held on Thursday March 10th from 9:30 am to 4 pm, attend just the main conference, or go to both. Check out the [WSWS website](#) for more information.

### **Snoqualmie Watershed Forum Seeking Community Representatives**

Are you a resident of the Snoqualmie Watershed who cares about the environment? Or are you involved in a non-profit organization that does conservation in the watershed? If so, you may want to contact the [Snoqualmie Watershed Forum](#) about being a non-profit organization or citizen representative. Established in 1998, the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum is a partnership between the Snoqualmie Tribe, King County, and the cities of Duvall, Carnation, North Bend and Snoqualmie. The forum also includes citizen representatives. The Forum's goal is to protect and restore the health of the Snoqualmie Watershed in harmony with the cultural and community needs of the Valley. To achieve this, the Forum provides leadership on key issues and implements projects that aid salmon recovery, protect water quality, and address flooding.

The Forum is currently seeking interested applicants for three citizen seats and one non-profit seat. This could be your opportunity to help guide future Forum direction and activities alongside elected, citizen and non-profit representatives from the Snoqualmie Watershed. To learn more about the Forum and to access application materials and eligibility details, contact [Maureen Dahlstrom](#) (phone 206-263-6058) or visit their [website](#) (<http://www.govlink.org/watersheds/7/>). The application deadline is Friday, Oct 29, 2010.

### **Department of Ecology Aquatic Weeds Grants Being Accepted Now**

This year's application deadline is fast-approaching for this state funding program that provides grants to counties, cities, state agencies, tribes, and special purpose districts to reduce the spread of freshwater weeds and manage the problems caused by these weeds. The Washington State Department of Ecology began accepting applications for [Aquatic Weeds Management Fund](#) (AWMF) grants on October 1 and they must receive all grant applications at their Olympia address by 5 p.m., November 1, 2010.

The types of activities funded include planning, education, monitoring, implementation of aquatic plant management plans, pilot projects (using innovative aquatic weed control technologies), demonstration projects (using new, emerging, or accepted but unfamiliar aquatic weed control technologies), and mapping and surveillance. Even if you don't work for an agency that can apply, if you are concerned about an aquatic weed problem in your area, you could contact someone in your local city or county and see if they could apply for this assistance to address

the problem. If it is too late for you to apply this year, it's not too early to start putting together ideas for an application for next year's funding cycle.

Ecology expects to have at least \$250,000 in grant funds available for AWMF project work for FY2012 (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012). An additional estimated \$400,000 will be available for project work for the FY2013 funding cycle. For more information, check out [the website](#) at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1010059.pdf>.

## Recent “Weeds in the News” Stories from Near and Far

[WEED WARRIORS: Grant to help council fight invasive weeds in the Truckee River watershed.](#) Invasive weed control in Tahoe gets a financial boost.

[BLM announces decision on weeds.](#) Oregon's BLM office announces an expansion of herbicide use for weed control efforts to include all invasive weeds as well as other vegetation management activities.

["Worst ever" fireweed destroying paddocks.](#) This story about a toxic pasture weed in New South Wales, Australia sounds very familiar to those of us fighting with tansy ragwort. Their plant pest called fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) is in the same genus as tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and is toxic to livestock in the same ways. You could call it tansy ragwort's South African cousin. Note that, although it's called fireweed, this plant is completely different from our native plant also called fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*). Interestingly, *Senecio madagascariensis* is a noxious weed in Hawaii as well as Australia, although it prefers a more tropical climate, so it's not likely to be a problem here.

[Invasive species conference coming to Fairbanks.](#) Heading up to Alaska this month? Invasive weed experts are gathering in Fairbanks on October 26-28. Sadly enough, invasive weeds are even becoming a problem in the more extreme climates of the world.

[Holly growers gather forces against weed-listing efforts.](#) The Capital Press reports that holly growers are worried about what listing holly as a noxious weed will mean for their industry.

[Idaho man builds career out of aquatic species removal after home lake is threatened.](#) In more news from Lake Tahoe, a local homeowner and expert diver makes it his personal mission to fight back against milfoil in the lake.

[Foreign plants, animals conquering native species.](#) In this article from Kentucky, the names of the invasives are different, but the story is familiar. It is interesting also to read about one of the unintended consequences of the ornamental plantings in their Olmsted parks.

[Green My Ballard: Upper Golden Gardens, Ballard's backyard wilderness.](#) Closer to home, this story is all about the great invasive weed control work being done in one of Seattle's really great forest remnants.

And finally, this story from British Columbia with a title I couldn't resist: [Noxious Weeds Take Note: Your days are numbered.](#) If only the weeds could read, they would be shaking in their roots.