

# Weeds in Alberta



## Weeds are a big problem!

Weeds are usually non-native species that have been introduced, intentionally or unintentionally, from other countries or ecosystems and that threaten Alberta's ecosystems and biodiversity.

They are typically aggressive plants with a high ability to reproduce and survive outside their natural range. Without their natural enemies (diseases and pests) present to keep them in check, outbreaks of these invasive plants can occur.

Economic losses from weeds can include reduced crop and forage quality and yield, lower property values, and infrastructure damage. Aquatic weeds can obstruct waterways and affect water quality. Some species can grow into cracks and cause damage to asphalt and building foundations. Weeds can also create fire hazards or harbour pests and disease, and some weeds are poisonous to humans and animals.

The non-native species that are of high environmental and conservation concern are those that are able to outcompete native species, that will move into and alter ecosystems, and that reduce biodiversity. This can include displacement of rare and endangered species.

Invasive non-native plants are not all officially considered weeds by government or agriculture. Forage plants such as smooth brome, crested wheatgrass, timothy and sweet clovers, and ornamentals such as bachelor's button, goat's beard and Peking cotoneaster can be very invasive, outcompeting native plants in prairie, forest and wetland. The Alberta Native Plant Council considers invasive agronomic and horticultural species to be a significant ecological problem in some native landscapes.

### **The Alberta Weed Control Act**

In Alberta, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the *Weed Control Act* (2010). The first *Weed Act* passed in 1907 and was most recently revised in 2010. The Act aims to regulate weeds and their seeds in Alberta.

Weeds are classified into two categories: prohibited noxious and noxious. The *Weed Control Regulation* (2010) lists species in each category and is found here:

[https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2010\\_019.cfm&leg\\_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779792474](https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2010_019.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779792474)

**Prohibited Noxious** weeds are generally not yet found in Alberta or are found in low numbers. This means we can still get rid of them before they become a big problem. The landowner or land occupant (me, you, the farmer, the municipality, etc.) is required to destroy all prohibited noxious weeds and seeds. Destroy means to kill all growing parts or to render reproductive mechanisms non-viable.

**Noxious** weeds are typically too widely distributed to eradicate entirely. If small numbers are found, they can be controlled. However, these species can easily spread and become unmanageable. Landowners are required to control noxious weeds, which means to inhibit their growth or spread.

Municipalities may designate additional species as noxious weeds or may elevate noxious species to prohibited noxious within their jurisdictions.

The province periodically updates the weed regulations. They invite stakeholders such as Alberta Native Plant Council, Alberta Invasive Species Council and other interested individuals to provide feedback on species to be added or removed from the regulations.

# What can you do?

## Don't plant weeds

Did you know many weeds are planted as garden ornamentals?



**Common baby's breath** (*Gypsophila paniculata*) Noxious. Commonly grown for floral arrangements, this weed outcompetes our native perennial grasses. One plant can produce 13,000 seeds and can have roots up to 4 m deep.



**Yellow clematis** (*Clematis tangutica*) Noxious. This climbing vine is commonly sold in garden centres and in seed mixes. It can spread by roots and by windblown seeds. It climbs over and smothers native plants (trees and shrubs in particular) and creates a fire hazard.



**Dame's rocket** (*Hesperis matronalis*) Noxious. This sweet-smelling plant is often found in non-native wildflower seed mixes. One plant can produce over 20,000 seeds. It invades and disrupts native plant communities.

The Alberta Invasive Species Council has developed a brochure *Be Plant Wise – Grow Me Instead*. This brochure gives useful tips on how to avoid planting weeds and provides suggestions for planting alternative species. <https://abinvasives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AISC-GMI-PlantWise-Brochure-web.pdf>

The Alberta Native Plant Council has put together Posey's Rogues: A Gallery of Exotic Invasive and Non-invasive Plants of Alberta. Check out this list before choosing your garden plants. [http://www.anpc.ab.ca/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.anpc.ab.ca/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

## ► For more information

Alberta Invasive Species Council's Invasive Plants of Alberta <https://abinvasives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Weed-Guide-2022-web.pdf>  
Alberta Environment <https://www.alberta.ca/weeds>  
*Weeds of the Prairies* by C. J. Bubar, S. J. McColl and L. M. Hall, 2000, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, AB.

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Cover photo – Common baby's breath (*Gypsophila paniculata*) © City of Calgary, Parks.

## Weed out weeds

Remove and dispose of weedy species correctly remove all plant parts (roots, stems, seeds, and flower heads) and burn or bag them for landfill disposal. You may need to repeat this yearly until the seed bank is depleted. You can also help out by volunteering for weed pulls in your community.

## Stop the spread

Clean off equipment, vehicles, and boats when moving from one location to another. Do the same for your pets and hiking boots.

## Report listed weeds

Early detection of weed infestations increases the likelihood that infestations can be controlled before they become widely established.

The Alberta Invasive Species Council encourages land managers and citizens to use the Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System and app.

Users can download the app and directly report weed locations from the field, upload photographs, and submit other information.

The website and app also provide resources on invasive species identification, distribution, and tools and training.

<https://abinvasives.ca/take-action/#eddmaps-alberta>



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