



Lancaster County Weed Control

May 2012

www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds

Public Relations

May was a busy month and we were able to get some good press coverage. A large part of noxious weed control and weed abatement is getting the landowner to understand the laws and to take care of the problem on their own. Any press coverage we can get goes a long way in our attempt to educate the public.

On May 14th I did an interview on First at Four at Channel 10/11. We discussed some of the noxious weeds that most people don't even realize are noxious. We talked about Saltcedar, purple loosestrife, knotweed and phragmites. Three of the last four weeds designated noxious by the State of Nebraska were originally sold as ornamentals.

An Acreage owner's newsletter is sent out by UNL Extension once a month and is a great way to reach property owners about invasive plants. This month's article was; [Not All Thistles Are "Noxious"](#). A lot of people think if it's a thistle it's bad, but there are some thistles that are beneficial to our diverse plant community and native to Nebraska.

Also this month, was an article printed on Memorial Day in the JournalStar about the Boy Scout troop volunteering at [Dietz Cemetery](#). I think this is going to be a great partnership for years to come.

The following is an article from the Lincoln JournalStar on May 18th.

Warm weather, weedy lawns keep inspectors busy

***By: Michael Bamesberger,
Lincoln JournalStar***

City ordinances governing weeds and hedges aren't well known among Lincoln residents, but they can cost those who don't abide.

One ordinance mandates property owners to cut and clear "weeds and worthless vegetation" that have

grown more than 6 inches tall. Another governs landscaping in the "park space," the area between the



street and sidewalk, and mandates that plants and hedges stay less than 30 inches tall and not grow onto sidewalks.

Musk thistle in a backyard in Lincoln

Failure to comply can result in a visit from a city-contracted mower -- and a bill after the work is done.

Brent Meyer, weed control superintendent, said thousands of complaints are filed every year with the Lancaster Weed Control Authority and Public Works.

This year, a warm spring pushed the growing season four weeks earlier than usual, Meyer said, causing an increase in weed growth as well as the number of inspections. So far, Weed Control has done 728 inspections.

Other than being unsightly, tall weeds can reduce property values, attract pests, exacerbate health problems and become fire hazards, he said.

A common problem is lack of awareness. For example, residents living along arterial streets often say they didn't know they were responsible for cutting grass and weeds along the street, even if the weeds are separated from their lawn by a fence, Meyer said.

Last year, the agency sent contractors to cut down weeds 269 times -- returning to some properties more than once.

The problem isn't isolated to one part of the city.

"With the foreclosure problem, it's everywhere," Meyer said. "There are some very nice

properties that get out of control because all of a sudden, no one lives there."

When homeowners don't respond to violations or don't comply in time, the city is authorized to have the area mowed and send a bill for the work, plus a \$100 fee.

If the fees aren't paid, city law allows the cost to be assessed as a lien against property.

Meyer said most people are cooperative, but a few properties are repeat offenders.

"We already have one property we are mowing for the second time this year," he said. "It's going to be a long summer."

Inspection Activity

Last year in my May report I mentioned that leafy spurge was in the flower stage and musk thistle was in the bud to bloom stage... what a difference a year makes, this year leafy spurge was flowering by the end of March and the musk thistle are already seeding out. It has been a busy year already with no end in sight.

We continue to battle with the railroad, which seems to be some of our worst problems. They are good at getting contractors back to do the job but they just have a tremendous amount of right of way to manage. Burlington Northern has a new Vegetation Manager in Ft. Worth this year and he has agreed to visit Lancaster County to try to put together a management plan. I guess he is getting tired of my phone calls and emails...



Musk thistle along BNSF tracks in Lancaster County

Noxious Weed Inspections

A total of 1,228 inspections on 810 properties were completed by the end of May. We have completed 3 force controls on uncontrolled violations.

Musk thistle and leafy spurge are just about done for the spring season and will follow up on those in the fall. Phragmites, purple loosestrife, saltcedar, knotweed and Canada thistle inspections are all just beginning and will continue for the next few months.

Number of sites infested by noxious weed

Musk thistle	310
Leafy spurge	301
Phragmites	52
Knotweed	5
Others	6

Japanese Knotweed at 56th & Holdrege



Japanese Knotweed prior to chemical application



Japanese Knotweed after chemical application

Weed Abatement Inspections

A total of 1,542 inspections have been made within the city of Lincoln on weed abatement. In addition to our preseason work orders we have received 636 complaints and performed 23 force cuttings.

June Planned Activities

6	5 Rivers WMA
8	NE Invasive Species Council
14	Management Team Meeting
19	LPWMA Meeting
21	Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center – Weed Walk
28	Problem Resolution Team
29	Monthly activity report