

Lancaster County Weed Control - City of Lincoln Weed Abatement

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Sericea lespedeza, Nebraska’s newest noxious weed

By: Mitch Coffin, NE Dept of Ag, Karie Decker, NE Game & Parks and Brent Meyer, Lancaster County Weed Control

For those unfamiliar with this invasive plant, the name itself can be difficult. [Sericea lespedeza](#) is a perennial that grows well in grasslands and pastures as well as along roadsides and drainage areas. It is mainly found in southeast and south-central Nebraska, though it has the potential to invade range and grasslands statewide. The herbarium record shows that sericea lespedeza was first collected in Richardson County in 1974 but has spread to 3,000 acres in Nebraska. The reason for introduction is unknown, but has been promoted in other states for wildlife habitat, used as a hay crop in southern United States or from contaminated seed or hay



As with many invasive species, learning to identify it is half the battle. The plant generally grows 3 - 4 feet tall, but will grow anywhere between 2 – 7 feet tall and can be identified by its alternate leaves. Lower leaf surfaces tend to have short hairs. Stems are straight, slender, and grooved and can have short hairs. Flowers, which bloom in late summer, range in color from white to cream to light yellow. Sericea lespedeza can

be not only challenging to pronounce, but to get rid of as well. It is an extremely aggressive invader of open areas. Dense monocultures of thickets are formed due to its ability to sprout from root crowns. Established sericea lespedeza plants will reduce or eliminate competing native vegetation, thus impacting native ecosystems and reducing carrying capacity for livestock (it is not palatable to most livestock). *(continued page 2)*

Lincoln Tree Service to volunteer at cemeteries

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners recently approved a contract with Jim Haas & Lincoln Tree Service to provide tree trimming and tree removal, as needed, at the six abandoned cemeteries

the county is responsible for maintaining. Jim has very generously volunteered his company to do the work at **no charge** to the county as a way of giving back to the community and county.

Volunteers for mowing include: Terry Briley at Evangelical, Steve Wedige at Jordan and Boy Scout Troop 64 at Dietz. We want to thank all our volunteers for helping maintain these historic sites.

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weeds](http://www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds)

Sericea lespedeza

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A combination of two or more control methods (mechanical, chemical, etc.) is the best approach when controlling sericea lespedeza. By utilizing several control options, your odds become greater that more plants will be controlled. Existing infestations spread rapidly through seed dispersal, which can be carried by wildlife, livestock, contaminated hay, vehicles and equipment. Continued monitoring and follow-up are essential for maintaining and reducing infestations.

Everyone's cooperation is needed in spotting and preventing new infestations. Early vigilance and action will prevent the huge cost of controlling large stands of sericea lespedeza. Making sericea lespedeza a noxious weed statewide allows County Weed Authorities to educate landowners on how to identify sericea lespedeza, make them better prepared to spot new infestations and eliminate small infestations before they become widespread.

In addition to sericea lespedeza, Nebraska has 11 additional noxious weeds: Canada thistle, leafy spurge, musk thistle, plumeless thistle, purple loosestrife, spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, saltcedar, phragmites, Japanese knotweed, and giant knotweed. The addition of sericea lespedeza to the noxious weed list will aid in efforts preventing its spread beyond southeastern Nebraska.

"This article will also appear in the July 2013 edition of NEBRASKAland Magazine."

UNL - Herbarium Tour

Lancaster County Weed Control hosted the April meeting of the Nebraska Weed Control Associations Region 1 superintendents.

Robert Kaul, Curator & Research Professor of the Charles E. Bessey Herbarium located on UNL Campus, lead the group on a very interesting tour of how plants are processed and stored.

During my career I have been part of making collections in the field. We put the plant in a press and sent it off to the herbarium, but never really understood what happened to a plant once they received it.



Professor Robert Kaul, Bessey Herbarium

It was interesting to see plants that were collected and stored from the late 1800's. I was amazed that they are still in very good condition.

With technology today we are able to share, very easily, information from around the world. Recently I saw a map that showed [yellow starthistle](#) reported in Lancaster County.

This was a concern; since I was aware that California, Oregon and other western states were having a very difficult time trying to manage this plant. Mr. Kaul was able to show us the actual yellow starthistle plant specimen that was collected in Lincoln in 1908. No reports have been received since that time, so I hope this is a case of what we refer to today as Early Detection – Rapid Response.

The species are kept forever, for future generations to learn from. Lancaster County has 895 plant species recorded at the herbarium.