



Lancaster County Weed Control & City of Lincoln Weed Abatement

August 2012

www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds

Giant Reed, *Arundo donax*



Just when we thought phragmites and knotweed were the worst things we'd ever seen, along comes phragmites gigantic cousin [giant reed](#).

Giant reed is a perennial grass that can reach up to 20 ft. tall. The stem resembles a corn stalk and has long, flat leaves up to 1.5 ft. long. Flowering occurs in late summer to early fall, when plants are most easily recognized because of the large, dense flower plumes. Giant reed invades wetlands such as ditches, stream banks and lake shores. Giant reed can completely suppress and remove native vegetation very easily, which reduces wildlife habitat, increases fire risks and interferes with flood control. Giant reed is native to India and was introduced into the United States in the early 1800s for ornamental purposes. Recently we have found 3 locations of giant reed in Lancaster County. I will be working with the Commissioners over the winter to make this a noxious weed giving us the authority to eradicate it before it spreads to the wetland areas.

Inspection Activity

Our inspectors have completed 6,726 inspections this season. Weed Abatement accounted for 4,718 inspections and another 2,008 on Noxious Weeds.

Weed Abatement – 4,718 inspections

With the dry weather you would expect our inspections to slow down. Unfortunately weeds are about the only thing that will still grow in these dry conditions. Our inspectors have completed more inspections this year than in 2011, but we've had to do fewer force controls. So, at least many owners

are taking care of the problem before we have to send in contractors.

Weed Control has responded to 1,260 complaints from the public. Those complaints, along with the properties that we inspect because of prior enforcements have resulted in issuing 707 legal notices and enforcing on 147 properties.

At least with the dry weather, those who don't typically mow, don't typically water either.

Noxious Weeds – 2,008 inspections

Initial inspections on phragmites & saltcedar are complete. We are currently working with landowners to get these treated this fall. Many landowners have signed up to have their phragmites sprayed this fall by helicopter and many more have either sprayed themselves or plan to have ground application done by local contractors. Skycopters is scheduled to be in Lancaster County in late September to get the phragmites sprayed prior to killing frost.

Fall is also the best time of year to treat musk thistle and leafy spurge, so we are encouraging landowners to get as many acres sprayed this fall as possible.

Weed Control conducted 2,008 inspections so far on 1,288 parcels. We have made 323 personal contacts, sent 674 letters encouraging voluntary control and issued 155 legal notices requiring the infestation to be controlled. As a result of the 155 legal notices 13 parcels were force controlled by our contractors.

Barb Frazier Retires



Chief inspector, Barb Frazier officially retired at the end of August. Barb served Lancaster County Weed Control for 20 years. She started out as a seasonal inspector for 5 years before becoming the Chief Inspector

for the last 15 years.

Commissioner Hudkins summed up Barb's career perfectly when he said that when he talked with landowners they would tell him that she was firm, but always fair.

Barb's strongest area was her ability to communicate with landowners. She would help them understand the benefits of controlling noxious weeds instead of just telling them they had to remove them. Barb's expertise will truly be missed.

The following article went out on this month's Acreage Owners E-news from UNL – Extension

CBS Documentary – Weeds taking root beyond the backyard

Weeds take root in crops, climate change, cuisine

By [Brent Meyer](#), Lancaster County Weed Superintendent

Recently CBS Sunday Morning aired a documentary on [Weeds taking root beyond the backyard](#). I encourage you to click on the link and watch the episode. While they did a great job bringing to light the problems we face with invasive species, I would like to comment on the portion; Goats eating Phragmites. When I watched the video it made it seem like all I needed to do is get some goats and in six weeks my phragmites would be gone. Anyone who had tried to eradicate their phragmites understands it is more difficult than just running a few goats out there.

This is what was reported in the documentary on August 19, 2012.

New York City hopes Larry Cihanek's goats will have better luck against another weed gone wild, an invasive variety of a reed called phragmites plaguing Freshkills Park, an enormous former landfill on Staten Island the city is restoring.



The experiment: To see if the goats will eat their way through 2 acres of the stuff.

"A goat eats about 20 percent of its body weight a day in weeds, so that's a 65/70-pound goat, so that goat's gonna eat 15 to 20

pounds of food a day," said Cihanek. "We have 20 goats. The objective was to do it in six weeks, and they'll certainly do it in six weeks."

It turns out they love phragmites. Six weeks later, success.

First, let me say Lancaster County Weed Department supports anyone wanting to use bio-control as part of their weed management plan, as long as they understand it is just another tool to use, but bio-control alone will not eliminate the weed problem. It is true that

goats, as well as cattle will eat phragmites and do well on it. We have several landowners in Lancaster County that are grazing cattle on phragmites as part of their control efforts. The plan is to graze the area early to hold the plant back and then spray the re-growth in the fall when the plant will be most likely to take the chemical down into its massive root structure.

Goats and sheep have been used throughout Nebraska to help manage leafy spurge for years, so it is not new that they will also eat phragmites. In my experience goats will eat almost anything you put in front of them. While grazing has had some success, it does require a lot of time to move the animals around to the individual patches. However, if continued regularly it can eventually weaken the root system of the plant.

Some things you should know about using livestock to graze phragmites.

- The animals will eat the plant and will not eliminate the root zone below the ground, so the plant will come back and try to produce seed.
- You will have to fence off the area around the phragmites or leafy spurge to keep them in a particular area. This will need to be done several times during the growing season to prevent seed production.
- Goats do not like to get in the water, and typically phragmites grows in and along the edge of water.
- Cattle will not typically eat phragmites if it's in a pasture setting because they can eat grass on good solid ground. Phragmites is usually in a swampy area where it's difficult for a cow to walk in muck up to their knees, so they avoid the area.

Contact Information

We need everyone's help, so if you would like more information on phragmites or would like to report an infestation contact the [Lancaster County Weed Control Office](#). Email: weeds@lancaster.ne.gov or phone 402-441-7817.

September Planned Activities

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| 3 | Holiday – Labor Day |
| 7 | SE NACO Meeting |
| 10 | Publish Fall General Notice |
| 11 | 5 Rivers WMA |
| 11- 13 | NWCA booth @ Husker Harvest Days |
| 13 | Management Team Meeting |
| 17 | NE Invasive Species Council |
| 18 | UNL Invasive Species class - Phragmites |
| 27 | Problem Resolution Team |
| 28 | Monthly activity report |
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Good Neighbors – Control Noxious Weeds!