

# Lancaster County Weed Control - City of Lincoln Weed Abatement

## 2012 Review

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*“This resulted in more payments being received before we had to file a lien on the property”*

The 2012 growing season got off to an early start with above average warm weather during the spring. Weeds started growing quickly and by the end of May we had already completed 18 forced cuttings. I remember worrying if we had moisture like we had in 2011, our budget may not handle it.

As it turned out we received very little rain for most of the summer and we ended the year with a total of 168 forced cuttings. This was down from 261 in 2011 for a 55% decrease. The average for the last 5 years has been 196 per year.

### Ordinance Changes

One of the more positive changes for 2012 was the changing of the Weed Abatement ordinance. A “Possible Notice of Unpaid Weed Assessment” is filed within 5 days of an



enforcement being completed. This keeps any properties from being sold without our office collecting the cost of control. In the past we didn’t have any way to flag a property at the Register of Deeds office to let potential buyers know there was a lien on the property. It had always been done all at one time in December at the Council meeting. This resulted in more payments being received before we had to file a lien on the property. A second change in the

ordinance, implemented in 2012, was the ability to post the property with a sign to notify the owner. We used this in cases where the letters being sent were returned to our office. The last major change introduced was letting properties over 1 acre in size be allowed to grow as long as they were mowed around the perimeter, kept free of weeds and mowed in the fall for a fire hazard. Overall the response to this was positive.

## City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program

The total number of inspections was up from 4,788 in 2011 to 5,354 in 2012, an 11.8% increase. The total number of properties also increased from 2,158 in 2011 to 2,276 in 2012, a 5.5% increase.

Complaints from the public were down from 1,852 in 2011 to 1,439 in 2012, a 28.7% decrease. This was most likely a result of the dry weather when most of the vegetation stopped growing. Notifications of

violations were made to property owners with 821 legal notices, 340 enforcement warnings, 1,537 reminder letters, and 52 personal contacts.

*“We saw the number of enforcements decrease by 93 in 2012. This was a 55% decrease from 2011”*

## 2012 Enforcements below 5-Year Average

In last year’s annual report I reported that the 2011 enforcements were up 38% from the previous year. Rainfall, more complaints & foreclosures were mentioned as the main reasons. We saw the number of enforcements decrease by 93 in 2012. This was a 55% decrease from 2011. The 168 enforcements in 2012 were also below the 5-year average of 196 for a decrease of 16.7%.

### Weed Abatement Enforcements

- 2008 207
- 2009 157
- 2010 189
- 2011 261
- 2012 168

**Average 196**

Some of the reasons:

Drought – In 2011 several properties were enforced on at least 3 times. In 2012 we didn’t have any properties enforced more than twice.

Allowing large parcels over 1 acre to be only mowed 50 feet around the edge. This was well received by the developers mainly because of cost savings.

## Noxious Weeds Inside Lincoln City Limits

Noxious weeds know no boundaries. They find themselves at home inside the city limits along the creeks, in wetlands and waste areas just as well as in the rural areas.

In 2012, 32.6% of our noxious weed inspections occurred inside the city limits. While these infestations are very small in the total number of acres infested, we continue to find noxious

weeds all around the city.

In the cases of saltcedar, purple loosestrife and the knotweeds they are found more in the city than in rural areas. This is because they were first introduced as ornamentals and planted in our landscapes.

Our city inspectors made 817 inspections on 443 sites and found 371 sites to have noxious weeds present.

### Lincoln’s Noxious Weeds number of sites infested in 2012

- Musk thistle 198
- Leafy spurge 64
- Phragmites 61
- Knotweed 22
- Purple loosestrife 16
- Canada thistle 8
- Saltcedar 2



## *Lespedeza cuneata* may be added to Noxious List



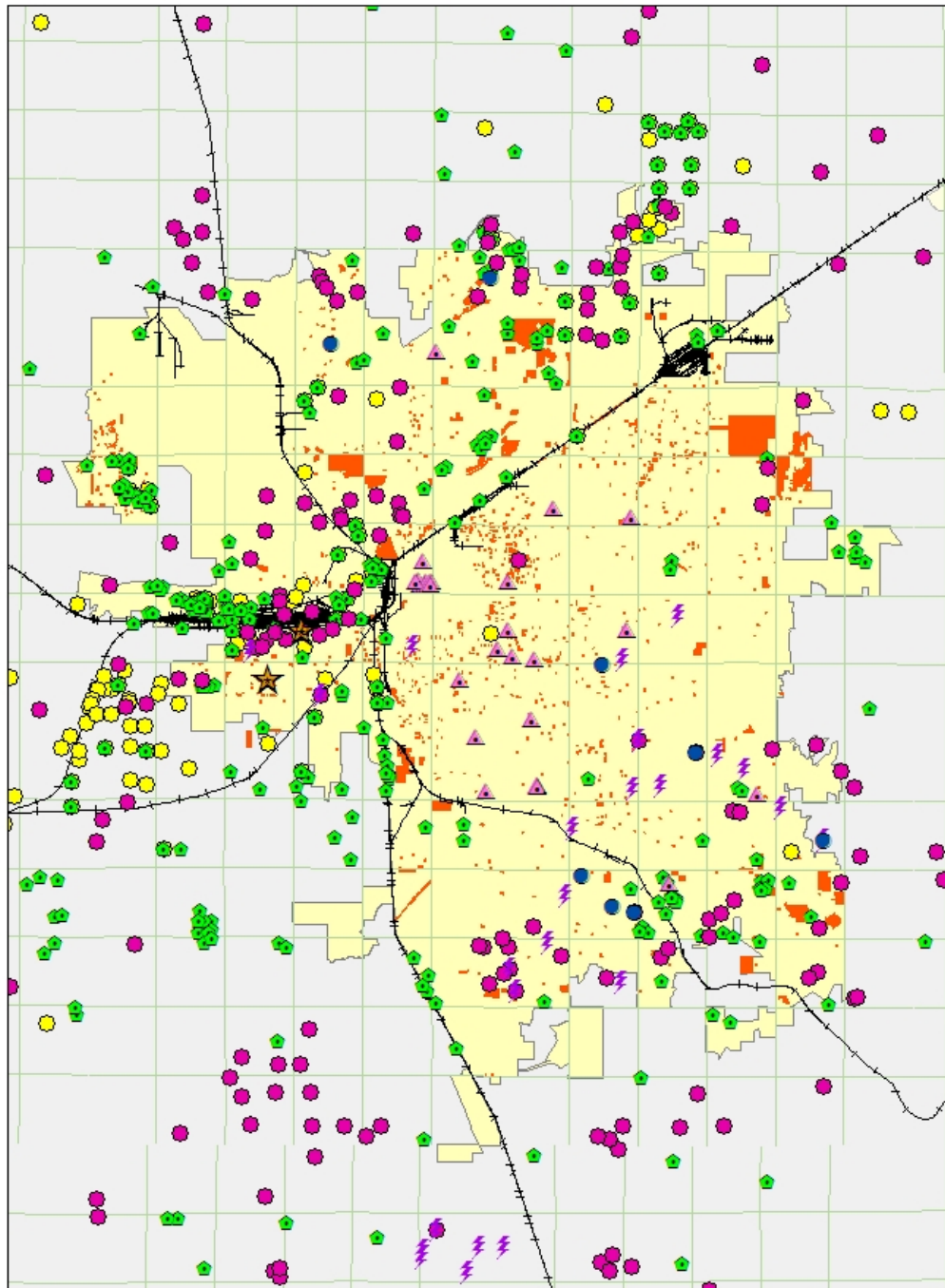
*Sericea Lespedeza*

Lancaster County Weed Control supports the addition of [Lespedeza cuneata](#), (known as











sericea lespedeza or Chinese bushclover) as a statewide noxious weed. Currently it exists mainly in southeastern Nebraska with approximately 60 acres infested in Lancaster County. *Lespedeza cuneata* has been a noxious weed in Kansas since 2000,

reporting around 650,000 infested acres. Nebraska’s Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) plan is to find new invaders early and eradicate them before they spread across our county and state. Waiting too long could end up costing property owners millions to control.

2012 City of Lincoln Weed Abatement & Noxious Weeds



Legend

- |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  2012WeedAbatement |  2012PurpleLoosestrife |  RailroadLines |
|  2012Saltcedar     |  2012Phragmites        |  sections      |
|  2012Knotweed      |  2012MuskThistle       |                                                                                                   |
|  2012CanadaThistle |  2012LeafySpurge       |                                                                                                   |

map by: Lancaster County Weed Control



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

## Combined Weed Program

Almost every ownership parcel outside of developed residential lots has or had one or more kinds of noxious weeds present. The key to noxious weed control is not allowing the plants to seed. This requires persistence and follow-up. Most of the public and private landowners understand this and are keeping their noxious weeds under control. It is the job of noxious weed control authority staff to assist landowners in the job of controlling noxious weeds. Many landowners are accomplishing control without any assistance or contact from the authority. The authority carries out a strong information and awareness program along with an extensive inspection program to encourage voluntary compliance of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act.

The authority has also provided the inspection and administration of the City of Lincoln's Weed Abatement program since entering into an Interlocal agreement with the City in 1996. The County Commissioners serve as the Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Authority. Brent Meyer serves as the superintendent and supervises a seasonal staff of six weed inspectors with the assistance of Chief Inspector Patrick Dugan and Julie Manske, Account Clerk.

## Outlook & Recommendations for 2013

Each year as we review the previous season we look at ways to make improvements for the next year. As we do this we always have to look at what it will cost and how it will affect the budget.

Every year we have some of the same repeat offenders that know how the process works. They will usually wait as long as possible before they cut their property. If they do that 3 or 4 times each year it will save them 1 or 2 cuttings and that is a big cost savings for them. Usually they get it done at the very last minute and in those cases we don't receive any reimbursement for our efforts, but still have all the time in inspections, mailings, etc. It has been our goal to not have to do the enforcements if we

can get the owner to cut their weeds. There are some owners, however, that I feel we need to be more aggressive with in 2013. With these owners we need to shorten the time frame on our process. The [Weed Abatement ordinance](#) allows us a 5 day window to enforce on a property. For most owners this is pretty quick. If we enforced all violations in 5 days our budget would not handle it. However, for those we know as repeat offenders we will no longer send a courtesy letter first. Instead, they will receive the legal notice first thing. This will shorten up the process about 1 week and cut down one inspection on those properties. Our ordinance also allows for a fine of up to \$100 per day of

violation. The down side to this is that it would take time gathering evidence, plus City Attorneys time as well as time in court. Plus, we would more than likely still have to spend money on the enforcement.

**LMC 8.46.060 Penalty.**  
*Any person upon whom a duty is placed by the provisions of this chapter who shall fail, neglect, or refuse to perform such duty, or who shall violate any order authorized by this chapter, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be fined in any sum not to exceed \$100.00. Each day that a violation of this chapter continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense and shall be punishable as such.*