

Weeds in the News 2012 Revegetation

By Robin Kusske

You Pulled A Weed, Now What? A Look At Revegetation.



Image by Robin Kusske, FCNWCB

Once control of this Dalmatian toadflax infestation is implemented, it will be necessary to revegetate with native broadleaves and grasses.

You just pulled that weed patch; chances are you don't want those weeds to return.

It is a well-known axiom that Nature abhors a vacuum. When you pulled that weed, you created a void that needs to be filled. No matter if you pulled one weed or a hundred, used herbicides, or mowed, you have created a disturbance in the natural order. Weeds know when an opportunity arises and they quickly find a way to move in. The most effective control method known to man is to replant and out-compete those weeds, and the resultant seed bank, with desired plants.

Weeds compete with desirable species for moisture, nutrients and space. Fewer weeds means more for seedlings and other desirable species to utilize. An important part of any weed management plan is the reintroduction of desirable species, removing the opportunity for new weeds to move in or old weeds to re-infest.

Revegetation is especially important on sites where weeds, especially highly aggressive noxious weeds, have been established for years. Most often there is a huge bank of noxious weed seeds and/or root fragments in the soil, waiting for an opportunity to grow. A noxious weed infestation that has been present for years may also mean the seed bank of desired plants has been depleted, making it harder for native stands to recover.

Weed control should start 12 months before planting. By starting early you can target the different weeds that come up throughout the year, ensuring a higher success rate for your project. Weeds need to be removed or sprayed with a non-residual herbicide at least 3-4 weeks before planting with a spot check one week before. This ensures the weeds are dead by the time you plant, providing space, nutrients and moisture for your seedlings and plants that would otherwise not be available.

Important questions when considering any revegetation program are: "What do you want to grow?" and "What will you be using the site for?" You will also want to consider site characteristics such as slope, soil type, rainfall and wind exposure, sun or shade, size of area, site preparation, time required, and equipment needed.

If you wish for a wildflower stand, be sure to read the ingredients in "wildflower mixes" since the term wildflower does not always mean native or non-aggressive, and they can often include noxious weed seeds. This would also apply to any other seed mixes as some packages could have a certain amount of noxious or other weedy seeds within the mix.

A follow-up weed control program is essential. Weeds, especially noxious weeds, that have been present for years are not going to give up their home without a fight. It is important to inspect the land regularly to identify and treat new infestations and recurrences. Be sure that follow-up weed management also takes into account your desired species so that you do not accidentally harm them.

For more information on revegetation contact the Franklin County Noxious Weed Control Board or your local extension agent.