Join us in celebrating Montana's Noxious Weed Awareness Week (MNWAW). A statewide event held every year during the first full week of June.

2026 MDA kNOweeds Partner Play Book June 7th-June 13th

Overview and Goals

The Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign, kNOweeds and partner agencies are coordinating a statewide celebration of Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week to raise public awareness about the impact of noxious weeds and empower preventative action.

- Raise public awareness about noxious weed impacts to Montana's environment, economy, and human health
- Provide clear, actionable steps Montanans can take to identify, prevent spread and report infestations
- Amplify partner agency messages and celebrations across social media and traditional channels
- Encourage early reporting and rapid response to noxious weed sightings
- To celebrate progress and motivate continued stewardship

Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week General Information

Help us spread the word in whatever way fits your community best. Use the ready-made materials below or create your own to share with local news outlets or community groups. When we share a unified message, we strengthen awareness and inspire action. Even a small post, note, or celebration can spark someone else to get involved.

Advertising:

General Information:

MT Noxious Weed Awareness Week

Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week Reporting Tournament

Early Detection and Rapid Response is key. Get out, explore, and report Montana State listed noxious weeds. The participant with the most verified Montana State listed noxious weed reports, during Montana's Noxious Weed Awareness Week will receive the grand prize.
Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week Reporting Tournament

Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week Daily Themes

Each day features a different noxious weed and management strategy you can use to guide your MNWAW education and celebrations to encourage others to do their part to keep noxious weeds in check. Below is guidance for messaging, links, reporting mechanisms, etc.

Date	Topic	Weed of the Day
Sunday, June 7th	kNOweeds	oxeye daisy
Monday June 8th	Prevention	rush skeletonweed
Tuesday, June 9th	Cultural Control	common buckthorn
Wednesday, June 10th	Mechanical Control	spotted knapweed
Thursday, June 11th	Biological Control	whitetop
Friday, June 12th	Chemical Control	leafy spurge
Saturday, June 13th	Reporting Weeds	blueweed

Day 1- Sunday, June 7th: Topic - KNOweeds
Weed of the Day - oxeye daisy

The state of Montana, according to the Montana County Weed Act (MCA 7-22-2101), a noxious weed is any exotic (non-native) plant species that may render land unfit for agriculture, forestry, livestock, wildlife, or other beneficial uses, or that harms native plant communities.

Currently we have 36 Noxious Weeds listed in the state and each county can have an additional set of weeds. Lacking the natural predators and diseases that kept them in check back home, they thrive in new environments. Especially in disturbed areas like roadsides, trails, construction sites, and

overgrazed lands. Once established, they outcompete native plants for sunlight, water, and nutrients.

Oxeye daisy is a Montana listed noxious weed that spreads aggressively in pastures, rangelands, and along roadsides. Although it looks like a common garden flower, it forms dense patches that crowd out native plants and reduce forage for wildlife and livestock. Because it spreads easily by seed and root fragments, even small plantings can escape cultivation and become a problem on nearby lands.

To help protect Montana's landscapes, residents are encouraged to plant native species or non-invasive alternatives instead. Garden favorites like Shasta daisy or chamomile offer a similar look without the ecological risk. Knowing weeds and choosing responsible plants helps keep noxious weeds from spreading and supports healthy, resilient ecosystems across the state.

Day 1 Resources
kNOweeds oxeye daisy

Day 2- Monday, June 8th: Topic - Prevention, Weed of the Day - rush skeletonweed

Prevention is the most effective and affordable way to manage noxious weeds. The easiest weed to deal with is the one you never have to face at all. Every Montanan plays a role in stopping the spread of invasive species by practicing good stewardship. Simple habits that make a big difference. Programs like *PlayCleanGo, Clean. Drain. Dry.*, and *buy it where you burn it*, to help prevent weeds, pests, and diseases from hitching a ride on vehicles, boats, firewood, or gear. Taking a few minutes to clean equipment between jobs or recreation sites can save years of costly control efforts later.

Prevention also means being mindful of what we plant and purchase. Using certified weed-free products, checking bird seed for contaminants, and choosing native or noninvasive plants for landscaping all reduce the chance of introducing new weeds. By

taking these small, proactive steps, Montanans help protect rangelands, waterways, and wild space. Keeping Montana's natural beauty and productivity strong for generations to come.

A new invader, rush skeletonweed, highlights why prevention is so critical. This deep-rooted perennial spreads rapidly by windblown seeds and underground shoots, forming dense stands that outcompete native grasses and reduce forage for livestock. Once established, it's extremely difficult to control. Its roots can reach over six feet deep, making herbicide and mechanical removal challenging. Preventing its spread through careful cleaning of equipment, monitoring new infestations, and avoiding contaminated materials is far easier than reclaiming land after it takes hold. Practicing prevention today protects Montana's landscapes from tomorrow's toughest weeds.

[Day 2 Resources]

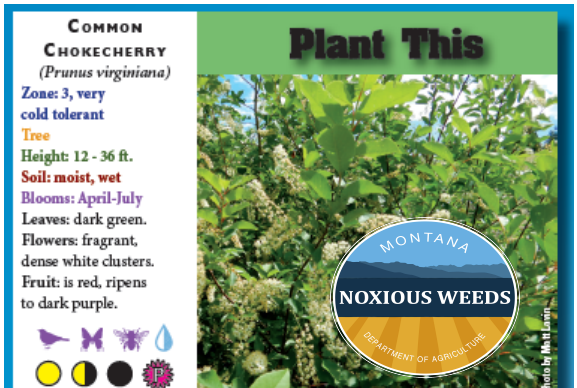
[kNOweeds rush skeletonweed]

Day 3- Tuesday, June 9th: Topic - Cultural Control, Weed of the Day - common buckthorn

Cultural control is one of the most effective ways to create landscapes that naturally resist noxious weeds. These practices focus on promoting healthy, competitive vegetation so weeds have fewer opportunities to establish. Maintaining strong plant communities through proper grazing, reseeding disturbed areas, mulching, and planting native species helps fill ecological gaps that weeds would otherwise exploit. When land is managed with soil health, plant diversity, and disturbance reduction in mind, weeds have a much harder time gaining a foothold.

Cultural control also includes everyday stewardship choices that reduce the chance of spreading invasive plants. Using certified weed-free hay and mulch, cleaning equipment between job sites, and choosing native or non-invasive ornamentals all help limit new introductions. Even small actions like checking bird seed for contaminants or avoiding the transport of soil and fill from unknown sources can prevent weeds from moving into new areas. These proactive steps protect Montana's working lands, recreation areas, and natural ecosystems.

Common buckthorn is a strong reminder of why cultural prevention matters. Originally brought to North America as an ornamental shrub, it escaped cultivation and now spreads aggressively in woodlands, riparian areas, and shelterbelts. Once it invades, buckthorn forms dense thickets, shades out native plants, and alters wildlife habitat. Disturbed soil gives it an even greater advantage. The first species to colonize an open patch is often a noxious weed like buckthorn. That's



why the saying goes: “Cover it up!” Reseeding or mulching disturbed areas immediately helps prevent reinvasion. Choosing native plants instead of ornamental invasives is one of the simplest and most effective ways Montanans can stop buckthorn and other invaders before they start.

Don’t Plant Common Buckthorn

- Introduced as an ornamental
- Spreads rapidly by seed and root suckers
- Forms dense, impenetrable thickets
- Outcompetes native shrubs and understory plants
- Very difficult and costly to control

Plant These Instead

- Serviceberry (Amelanchier)- Native, wildlife-friendly, and great for hedges
- Chokecherry (Prunus virginiana)- Hardy, attractive, and supports pollinators
- Woods rose (Rosa woodsii)- A tough native shrub that provides habitat and color
- Red-osier dogwood (Cornus sericea)- Excellent for riparian areas and erosion control

When removing buckthorn, cover disturbed soil immediately. The first species to colonize bare ground is often a noxious weed, oftentimes, buckthorn itself. Reseeding with native grasses or mulching right away helps prevent reinvasion and keeps Montana’s landscapes healthy.

Day 3 Resources
kNOweeds Common Buckthorn
MT Woody Invasive Work Group
MT Field Guide
Plant This Not That Buckthorn

Day 4- Wednesday, June 10th: Topic – Mechanical Control, Weed of the Day - spotted knapweed

Mechanical control is a straightforward way to manage noxious weeds by physically removing or cutting plants. Pulling, digging, or mowing works especially well on taproot species when done before flowering and seed development, which greatly reduces the chance of spreading them. If a plant is already flowering, always bag and trash it so seeds can’t escape. If it hasn’t flowered yet, it’s safe to leave it on site. Cleaning tools, boots, and equipment between sites further reduces the risk of accidentally moving weeds from one area to another. After removal, cover disturbed soil with non-invasive native seed. Bare ground is an open invitation for new weeds to take hold.

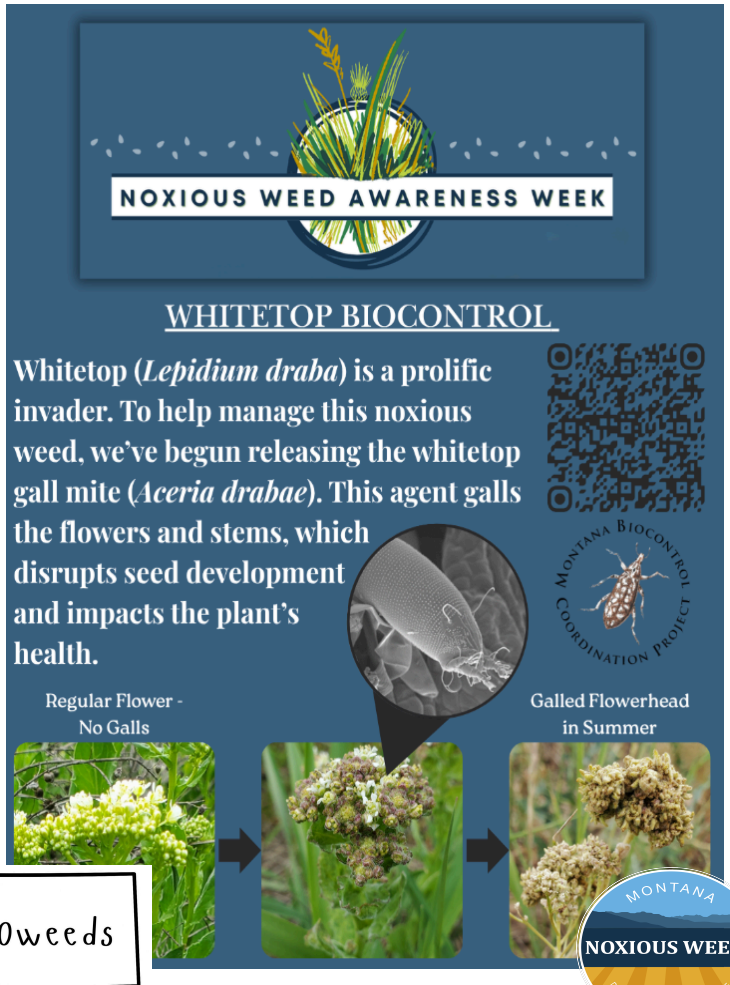
Spotted knapweed is one of Montana's most recognizable noxious weeds, easily identified by its purple, thistle-like flowers and deep taproot. It is a prolific seed producer, with a single plant capable of releasing thousands of seeds that can remain viable in the soil for years. This makes early detection and mechanical removal especially important. The Pull Your Share effort encourages Montanans to spend five to ten minutes removing weeds like spotted knapweed before recreating, to help reduce seed spread and protect native plant communities. Every plant pulled before it flowers prevents countless seeds from entering the landscape, and when paired with reseeding or mulching, these small actions make a meaningful difference in keeping Montana's rangelands healthy.

Day 4 Resources
kNOweeds Spotted Knapweed
mowing to manage noxious weeds [extension-store.montana.edu]

Monthly Weed Post, July 2023 - MSU Extension Invasive Plants | Montana State University [montana.edu]

Day 5- Thursday, June 11th: Topic - Biological Control - Weed of the Day – whitetop

Biological control is an important long-term tool for managing noxious weeds in Montana. By introducing natural enemies (insects, pathogens, etc.) that attack the specific invasive plants, biocontrol helps reduce weed vigor and spread in areas where herbicides or mechanical treatments aren't practical. Montana has seen success with agents targeting leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, Dalmatian and yellow toadflax, making biocontrol a valuable part of integrated weed management.



The Montana Biological Weed Control Coordination Project supports this work by helping land managers identify suitable biocontrol agents, distributing insects, and providing training and monitoring assistance. The project also participates releasing and monitoring newly approved biocontrol agents like the one for whitetop

only

and

in

(hoary cress), a Montana listed noxious weed to gain information regarding the impact of newly approved agents and build up new biocontrol agent populations to make them more readily available for distribution. By helping managers understand where biocontrol is available and where other strategies are still needed, the project strengthens responsible, effective weed management across the state. Please enjoy and share the resources they have provided below to learn more.

[Day 5 Resources]
kNOweeds Whitetop

Day 6- Friday, June 12th: Topic - Chemical Control - Weed of the Day - leafy spurge

Chemical control is an important tool for managing noxious weeds, especially species with deep or extensive root systems that don't respond well to pulling or mowing. Herbicides can move into the root system, helping prevent regrowth and reducing long-term spread. Timing matters. Treating weeds when they are actively growing improves effectiveness, and avoiding applications when plants are flowering helps reduce the risk of spreading seed. Always follow the product label, use proper protective equipment, and clean sprayers and tools afterward to avoid transferring weed seeds or plant fragments to new areas.

Chemical control works best when paired with good stewardship practices. Treating weeds before they produce seed reduces future infestations, and treating small patches early prevents them from becoming large, costly problems. After treatment, monitoring the site and encouraging desirable vegetation helps fill gaps and reduce the chance of reinvasion. As with all weed management, covering disturbed soil with native seed or mulch helps prevent new weeds from taking hold.

Leafy spurge is one of Montana's most challenging noxious weeds, known for its deep, extensive root system and milky latex sap. It spreads both by seed and by aggressive underground shoots, allowing it to form dense monocultures that displace native grasses and reduce forage for livestock and wildlife. Because leafy spurge can regenerate from tiny root fragments, mechanical control alone rarely effective. Chemical control, often combined with biological agents and grazing, is a key part of long-term management.

Early detection and rapid response are essential. Leafy spurge is a prolific seed producer, and its seeds can remain viable in the soil for years. Treating infestations before seed set,

cleaning equipment between sites, and restoring treated areas with native, competitive vegetation all help slow its spread. By taking action early and practicing careful stewardship, Montanans can make a difference.

Day 6 Resources
kNOweeds Leafy Spurge
MT Bio Control Leafy Spurge

Day 7- Saturday, June 13th: Topic - Reporting Weeds - Weed of the Day - blueweed
Reporting noxious weeds is one of the simplest and most effective ways Montanans can help protect the state's lands. Early detection allows land managers to respond while infestations are still small, easier to control, and far less expensive to treat. When new weeds are found and reported quickly, it prevents them from spreading into rangelands, recreation areas, and private property. Reporting also helps agencies track where weeds are moving, prioritize treatment, and coordinate efforts across counties and landowners. A single report can prevent years of future spread.

Reporting is especially important because many noxious weeds can go unnoticed until they are well established. Hikers, landowners, recreationists, and equipment operators are often the first to spot new plants. By sharing what they see whether to local weed districts, MSU Extension, or apps like iNaturalist or EDDmapS, Montanans can help stop invasive species before they become widespread problems.

Blueweed (also called viper's bugloss) is a perfect example of why reporting matters. This striking plant with bright blue flowers may look harmless, but it spreads aggressively along roadsides, pastures, and disturbed soils. Blueweed is a prolific seed producer, and its seeds can easily hitchhike on vehicles, boots, pets, and equipment. Once established, it forms dense patches that crowd out native plants and reduce forage for wildlife and livestock. Because early infestations are much easier to manage than large, mature stands, reporting blueweed as soon as it's found helps land managers respond quickly and prevent it from gaining a foothold in Montana.

Day 7 Resources
kNOweeds Blueweed
MSU Extension Biology, Ecology and Management of Blueweed

Montana Noxious Weed Awareness Week Celebrations

Share your celebrations! Whether you are following along with the daily themes or celebrating in your own way, whatever works for you, share it! Post it to social media, share with county news outlets, send to agrweeds@mt.gov to share. Encourage others to join in the excitement and learn about impactful noxious weed stewardship practices.