

Neighborhood Problem Weeds:

- Thistles
- Tumbleweeds (Russian Thistles)
- Puncture Vines

Thistles:

BACKGROUND: **Bull and Scotch** thistles are native to Europe and eastern Asia. They grow well in disturbed areas, pastures, road shoulders, and along canal banks.

DESCRIPTION: This biennial plants commonly grow 3 to 8 feet tall, but it may grow as high as 12 feet. Rosettes may be 4 feet wide. Large, spiny leaves are covered with dense hair, giving a grayish, blue-green coloration. The flowers are violet to reddish with spine tipped bracts, blooming in mid-summer.

CONTROL: Herbicides can offer good-to-excellent control when applied between rosette and pre-bud stages. Locally, a mixture of Round-Up and 2,4-D work well when spraying individual plants. Usually two sprayings, approximately a week apart, are needed to kill the plant.



Tumbleweeds:

FIRE HAZARDS: When dry, tumbleweeds can burn quickly and very hot because of their light, airy structure. They are a severe risk for spreading wildfires.

ALLERGIC REACTIONS: Some people are allergic to the pollen and sap of Russian thistle. The pointy tips can puncture the skin of humans and animals and cause dermatitis or infection.

DISTRUPT ECOSYSTEMS: Tumbleweeds are a highly invasive species. Due to turned-over soil from road grading, they will undoubtedly take over the area, displacing native plants and animals.

CONTROL: As with the other thistles, a mixture of Round-Up and 2,4-D work well in controlling these pests. Spraying them early in the season, when they are still small, works to limit numbers.



INVASION OF CALTROPS AND GOATHEADS

Tom Biller

Puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*) is a noxious weed sometimes called “goat head.” It is a summer annual that grows in disturbed areas and is becoming a pest in our sub-division. Puncture vine is a low-growing, mat-forming plant with yellow flowers and small leaflets that resemble small mesquite leaves. It has trailing stems that may reach one to six feet long in the summer. Hard spiny burs, about one-half inch wide, develop after the spiny fruits ripen. The spiny burs, also known as “caltrops”, contain the seeds. When the burs stick into shoes, tires, animals and other moving objects, they are dispersed into new areas. Puncture vine “goatheads” can puncture bare feet of kids and pets, thin shoes, along with bicycle and worn vehicle tires. Some residents have taken notice and are instigating measures to control this noxious plant.

Traditionally, ranchers and homeowners have used various herbicides to control puncture vine in and around grazing lands and residential landscapes. Weed and Feed or 2,4-D, can be used where puncture vine has invaded lawn areas. Along road shoulders and open areas I’ve had pretty good luck using a mixture of 2,4-D and Round-up, spraying each plant individually. Sometimes it will require a second spraying to kill them.

In our neighborhood, puncture vine is showing up along road shoulders and in the field surrounding our well site. Measures have been taken to reduce the number of puncture vine plants in the area used for “Trunk and Treat”. If you note these plants in and around your property, you’ll want to take action to get them removed. Contact the Utah State University Extension office representative for more information: Josh Martin, josh.martin@usu.edu 435-267-175



Leaves and flower of puncture vine.



Goatheads stuck into tire.