

Property Owners Guide to Invasive Plants



Welcome to the Okanagan-Similkameen!

If you are a new property owner or even if you are just renting, there is a lot to learn about what you can do to minimize the spread of invasive plants in your backyard. This handout will provide you with an overview of what invasive plants are, what you should be watching for, why it is important to be able to identify them, and what you can do to prevent or control new or existing infestations.

What are Invasive Plants?

Invasive plants are typically non-native plants that have been introduced to British Columbia without the insect predators and plant pathogens that help keep them in check in their native habitats. Without their natural enemies, these invaders are able to rapidly outcompete native plants, ornamental species and agricultural crops. The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has classified some of the most harmful invasive plants as "noxious weeds". Many of these plants can displace native species and disrupt natural ecological processes. These invasive plants can contribute to a decrease in your property value and the landowner is legally responsible to control designated noxious weeds under the Regional District's bylaw No. 2065.

What Should I be Watching For?

Some of the more common species in the Okanagan-Similkameen region are:

- Dalmatian Toadflax
- Hound's-Tongue
- Diffuse & Spotted Knapweed

Some ornamental escapees that you may find lurking on your property are:

- Orange Hawkweed
- Cypress or Myrtle Spurge
- Invasive Knotweeds

For a more extensive list of invasive plants in our region, check out: www.oasiss.ca

How do I Prevent or Control the Spread of Invasive Plants on my Property?

First and foremost, it is important to be able to identify invasive plants. Knowing what species of plants are invasive in your local area will help you understand which plants should be removed from your yard. The best means of controlling invasive plants depends on their life cycle. For example, annual plants typically have small roots and do not need to be hand pulled, but can instead be cut at ground level before they have produced seeds. Perennials, however, often have deep or creeping roots and all the root system must be removed for effective control. Your local Invasive Plant Coordinator may be available to conduct a visit of your property and provide specific information and solutions.

Many invasive plants are deceptively beautiful with brilliant flowers. Some are commonly mistaken and knowingly sold as ornamental species for our gardens.



Knotweeds compromise foundations with their powerful roots.

When adding new plants to your garden, be sure to **select the right plant for the right place**. Be suspicious of plants promoted as "fast spreaders" or "vigorous self-seeders" as these are often invasive plants. Avoid using wildflower seed mixes unless you can be assured they are from a reputable local source. Also, if importing fill, gravel, rock or mulch to your property, check the source of these materials to ensure invasive species are not present. This is one of the most common ways that invasive species are introduced onto private properties.

Hope for the Future: Biological Control

Biological control reunites invasive plants with their natural insect enemies in an attempt to suppress infestations to an acceptable level, but will not eradicate these undesirable plants. While chemical or physical control measures can effectively reduce invasive plant infestations, these options can also be impractical, labour intensive and costly. When infestations are large and dense or occur in sensitive habitat, biological control is often the most suitable option for long-term, effective control. The released insects are host-specific and will not become a problem on other plants. Your local Invasive Plant Coordinator can advise if there are insect enemies available for the invasive plants on your property and can also assess the suitability of your property for release of a biological control agent.



Knapweed beetle



Toadflax beetle

Help educate members of your community by participating in garden club activities, informing neighbours of invasive plants or organizing a community weed pull.

Are you building a new home, planning an expansion or otherwise moving / disturbing soil on your property?

Invasive plants thrive in disturbed soils, so reducing your footprint and seeding exposed soils immediately post-disturbance will significantly reduce the vulnerability of an area to establishment of invasive plants. Seeding can also help provide food for wildlife and/or domestic animals, help to minimize erosion and dust, and can be aesthetically pleasing. There are several factors that are important when choosing a seed mix or having a mix custom blended, including soil type, availability of irrigation, slope, aspect and elevation. Typically the seed mix is comprised of a variety of grasses, although native flowers and shrub seeds may be added if they are locally available. The seed should be free of noxious or invasive weeds. Seeding is best done in late winter or early spring, or may be applied the fall before the first snowfall (referred to as 'dormant seeding'). Small areas can be seeded by hand while larger sites can be mechanically broadcast seeded or hydro-seeded. Seeding should be followed by a light raking or harrowing to cover the seeds. If hiring a contractor, ensure they are cleaning their machinery and equipment prior to any activities carried out on your property. Contact your Invasive Species Coordinator for more information.

Taking simple preventative measures will save you both time and money.

For further information on invasive plants contact the Okanagan-Similkameen Coordinator:

(250) 492-0237 or toll free at 1-877-610-3737.

Information is also available on the following websites:

www.oasiss.ca

www.bcinvasives.ca

www.weedsbc.ca

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