Country Living at It’s Best- Controlling Noxious Weeds

Wildflowers add beauty to many fields and grasslands in Kansas. While the bright purple flowers that bloom in June may be pretty, they may also be illegal to grow. The purple flowers being referred to is musk thistle, a Kansas noxious weed.

Kansas statutes identify specific noxious weeds and regulate their control and eradication. Landowners are required to control noxious weeds on their property. Control is defined as preventing the production of viable seed and the vegetative spread of the plant. If not controlled, the state has the authority to take control measures and charge the landowner for the cost of control and to take a lien on the property for unpaid charges.

Weeds that have been identified as noxious in Kansas, as of 2006, include: field bindweed, musk thistle, Johnson grass, bur ragweed, Canada thistle, leafy spurge, hoary cress, quack grass, Russian knapweed, kudzu, pignut, and Sericea Lespedeza.

The Douglas County Weed Department and Extension Office can help you identify noxious weeds and give guidance about control. Douglas County Noxious Weed Director, John Landon, reports, “we have found four of the twelve noxious weeds in our county, and have seen an increase in the spreading of these noxious weeds musk thistle, field bindweed, Johnson grass, and Sericea Lespedeza.”

The Douglas County Weed Department provides sprayers and chemicals at reduced prices to help landowners control infestations. You may call them at 785-331-1330 ext. 101.

Noxious weeds may be controlled by tillage, digging, mowing, biologically, and with chemical herbicides, depending on the weed species. Douglas County Extension Agricultural Agent, Bill Wood, states, “it is much easier to control noxious weeds, if they are identified when they are first getting started in a field or pasture. Once they have gone to seed and started to spread, it is much more difficult and expensive to control and try to eradicate them.”
Any time chemicals are used, the user responsible for protecting the groundwater and surface water, reading and following all label directions, and practicing safety when working with chemicals. Chemicals should be kept a safe distance away from wells and surface water. Persons who handle and apply certain restricted use chemicals are required to be certified. Contact the Douglas County Extension Office at 785-843-7058 for information on becoming certified to use restricted pesticides.

While many plants add beauty and value to the landscape, noxious weeds left uncontrolled can quickly leave land in a detrimental state. Being a good neighbor means being responsible and diligent about controlling the noxious weeds on your property.

This is part of a series of articles on “Country Living at It’s Best- Being a Good Neighbor.” These articles may be found at www.oznet.ksu.edu/douglas. Contact the Douglas County Extension Office at 785-843-7058 if you have further questions.

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