

High Country Conservation



2019

LARAMIE RIVERS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Summer/Fall Edition

THE CONTENTIOUS WEED - by Laura McGinley

There are numerous definitions of a weed:

- a plant out of place and not intentionally sown
- a plant growing where it is not wanted
- plants that are competitive, opportunistic, noxious, and interfere negatively with human activity

No matter the definition one uses, weeds are plants whose undesirable traits outweigh their good within the manmade environment. It is our human activities that create weed problems since no plant is a "weed" in nature and, while we may try to manipulate nature for our own good, nature is persistent and often impedes our efforts. Through persistent management, we succeed in controlling certain weeds yet some prove a more serious challenge. Weeds are naturally strong competitors and weeds that compete the best tend to dominate. Both humans and nature are involved in plant breeding programs. The main difference between the two programs is that man breeds plants for best yield, while nature breeds plants for survival.

- a. abundant seed production;
- b. rapid population establishment;
- c. seed dormancy;
- d. long-term survival of buried seed;
- e. adaptation for spread;
- f. presence of vegetative reproductive structures; and
- g. ability to occupy sites disturbed by human activities.

Certain characteristics are associated with and allow the survival of weeds. Weeds possess one or more of the following. There are approximately 250,000 species of plants worldwide; of those, about 3% or 8000 species behave as weeds. Weeds can cause problems in many ways but the most challenging and expensive to address is the problems they present to agriculture. They reduce crop yield by competing for water, light, soil nutrients, and space; reduce crop quality; serve as hosts for crop diseases; and produce chemical substances which are toxic to crop plants, animals, or humans.

Despite the negative impacts of weeds, some plants usually thought of as weeds may actually provide some benefits. Some attributes include: soil stabilization, habitat and feed for wildlife, nectar for bees, aesthetic qualities, add organic matter, human consumption; and provide employment opportunities. [Continued on back page]

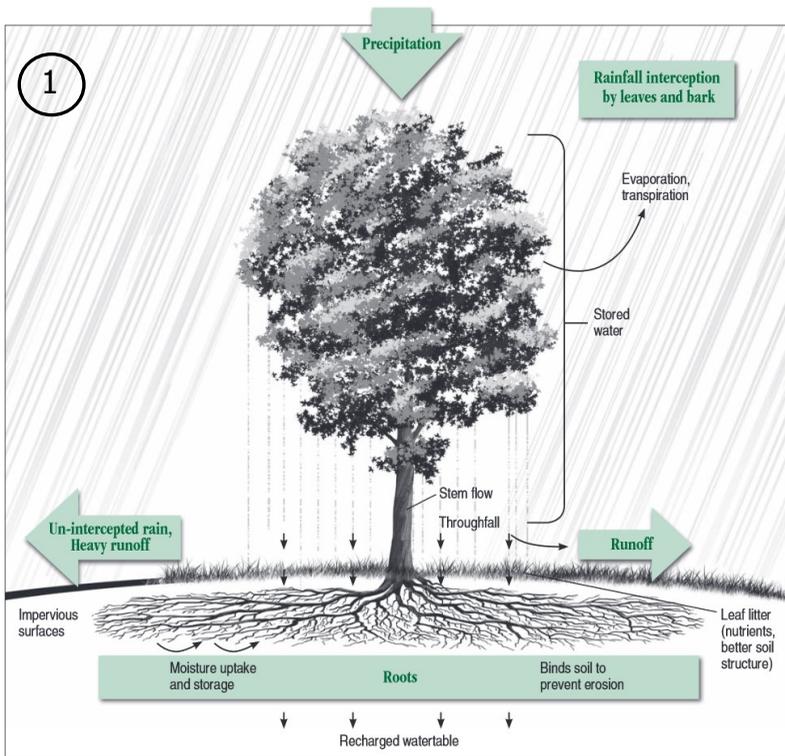


WEEDS COMMON TO LARAMIE URBAN AREAS

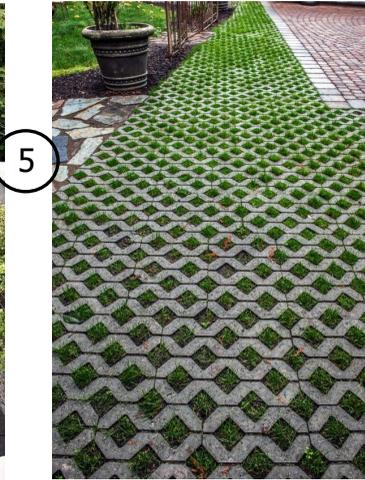
1. Hoary Cress/"Whitetop"
2. Field Bindweed (Morning Glory)
3. Sowthistle

Tips for Landscape Planning in Dry Climates - by Laura McGinley

Important Ways a Tree Helps with Stormwater Management



1. Use trees as the backbone of the garden. Trees give shade, keep the ground cooler, and retain stormwater.
2. Use native and low-water plants and don't over water. University of Wyoming Extension has very useful information on their website www.uwyo.edu/barnbackyard/resources/landscaping as well as the publications *Promoting Pollinators On Your Place* that lists plants in order of bloom time from spring to fall, and the *Plants With Altitude* guide.
3. Harvest or direct storm water to cisterns, rain gardens, swales, and trees.
4. Use mulches and compost on and in soil to retain water.
5. Use permeable hardscaping (pavers, gravel, crushed granite, flagstone, grass reinforcement grids) for gathering spaces and driveways. They decrease stormwater runoff, reducing the amount of pollution that goes into our storm drains and into our waterways and allows rainwater to permeate into the ground which helps recharge our groundwater reservoirs.
6. If you have a sloping lot, create check dams with stone or salvaged broken concrete to slow rainwater when it does come and help the water to percolate into the soil. Garden beds at base of slopes also make use of rainwater flow.
7. Create microclimates. Use walls, fences, trees, & structures to shade sections of the garden from the sun.
8. Use drip irrigation to maintain best possible soil moisture throughout the season.



5



7



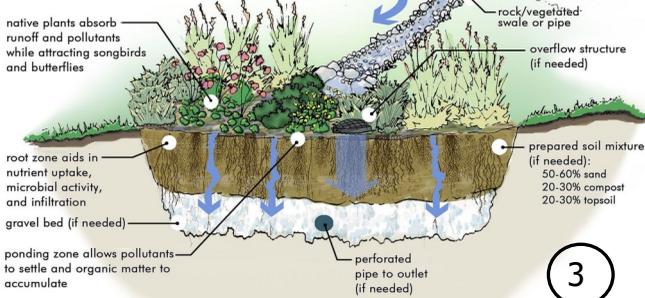
Fire Mitigation Planning

by Tony Hoch

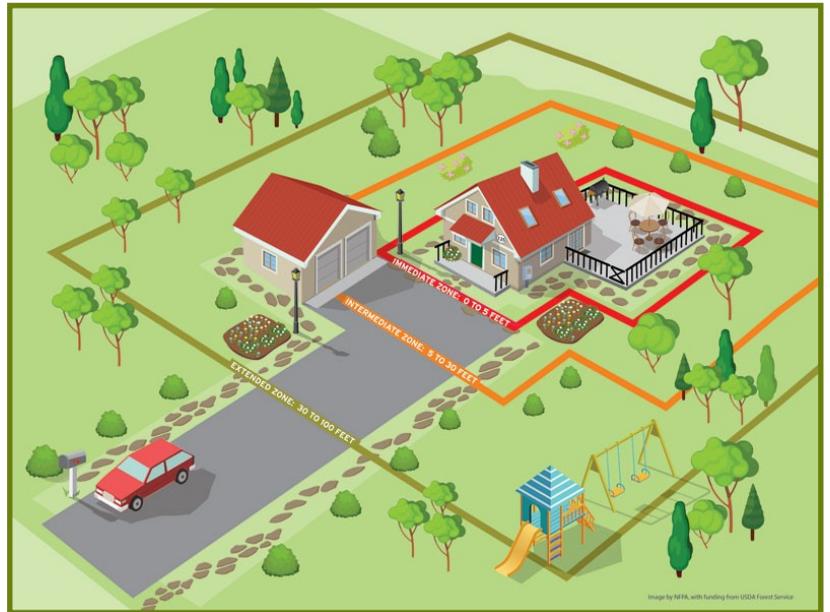
On June 1 LRCD co-sponsored a fire mitigation workshop for Carbon and Albany County residents at the Ryan Park fire station. It was well attended and featured speakers from Wyoming State Forestry and The US Forest Service. After the talks there was a tour looking at tree health and practices that can be put in place to protect homes and structures from forest fires. This is an extremely important issue for people living in, or with vacation places in wooded areas known as the “wildland-urban interface”. There are programs available to financially help people manage their forest on several acres, which can be a physically daunting task better performed by contractors who have the equipment and know-how.

residential rain garden

(keep 10 feet away from most structures)



3



Rain Garden

6



Programs and funding are available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (co-located in LRCD’s office) for agricultural producers and forest landowners, and through Wyoming State Forestry for smaller residential projects. Practices might include clearing a firebreak or removing diseased and dead trees. To get started, all of the programs have one major requirement: having a professionally prepared “Forest Stewardship Plan”. This plan basically maps and inventories trees, tree issues, buildings, marketable timber, and lays out what might be a multi-year plan for making your property more resilient in the face of wildfires. Home owners associations can do planning and apply for assistance as group for better efficiency too. Staff at State Forestry can assist with forest stewardship plans, and their phone number is 307-777-7586. With the mountains still moist and what looks right now, like a mild fire season, this summer and fall offer a great opportunity to get ahead of the game and do your planning and take steps toward mitigating fires for the dry years ahead.

**LARAMIE RIVERS
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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The Contentious Weed continued from pg. 1...

Wyoming has designated 30 plants as weeds and Albany County has an additional three that are a problem for our area. These are: Locoweed, Native Larkspur, and Cheatgrass (seen below). There are a few options available to Albany County residents who are looking for help with their weed problems.

1. Albany County Weed & Pest - provides cost share grants covering 60% of chemical cost for Wyoming Designated Noxious Weeds 35% of chemical cost for Albany County Declared Noxious Weeds. They can be contacted at 742-4469.
2. University of Wyoming Plant Science Department and Cooperative Extension Service have an online weed identification site is found at www.uwyo.edu/uwe/wyoweed/wyoweed.htm
3. UW Extension/Albany County Office/Brian Sebade - can help with weed identification and information on best techniques for elimination. He can be reached at 307-721-2571
4. Laramie Rivers Conservation District can assist with plans and funding for landscape design and range management to keep weeds to a minimum. Call us at 307-721-0072 or on the web at www.LRCD.net.



Locoweed/*Oxytropis sericea* Nutt.



Locoweed/*Oxytropis lambertii*



Larkspur/(*Delphinium geyeri*)



Cheatgrass/*Bromus tectorum*