



# Whatcom Weeds

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## BUTTERFLY BUSH

### *Buddleja davidii*

**THREAT:** Butterfly bush, native to China, has become a very popular garden ornamental in North America. However, it has escaped cultivation, invading roadsides, riparian areas, pastures, river gravel bars and other disturbed areas. Butterfly bush produces large quantities of wind and water dispersed seed (up to 3 million seeds per plant), which can remain dormant in the soil for many years. When cut down, it resprouts readily from the rootstock and can be propagated through cuttings. Butterfly bush can reach maturity in less than one year, which allows it to spread quickly, forming dense thickets and excluding native vegetation. Although this plant is touted as a beneficial plant for butterflies, it cannot be used as a butterfly host plant and displaces the native plants needed by butterflies for reproduction. Butterfly bush is very adaptable, growing in most soil types and climates. This plant has also become invasive in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. *Buddleja davidii* is listed as noxious in Oregon and Washington and has been banned from sale in Oregon.



**DESCRIPTION:** Butterfly bush is a large deciduous shrub, growing up to 10 feet tall. Leaves are lance-shaped and opposite, up to 4 inches long and ½ inch wide. While the tops of the leaves are dark green in color, the undersides are given a light appearance from numerous whitish hairs. The leaves have small serrations along the edges. The small, fragrant, funnel-shaped flowers are usually purple, although there are also red, pink, blue, orange, yellow and white varieties. The flowers are borne in showy spikes at the ends of the stems and bloom from mid-summer into the fall.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Butterfly bush can be controlled through mechanical and chemical means. Since it only reproduces by seed, clipping flowerheads (deadheading) is an effective way to keep plants from spreading. Hand digging is possible for small numbers of plants or seedlings, although soil disturbance will encourage seeds in the soil to sprout. Controlled sites will need to be monitored in subsequent years to ensure no new plants become established. Although mowing/cutting could be used to prevent seed production, the plants will resprout. Contact the weed control board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

