KING COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL PROGRAM WEED ALERT

Goatsrue

Galega officinalis Pea Family

Class A Noxious Weed: Eradication Required

Identification Tips

- Perennial herbaceous plant
- Reaches heights of 4 feet
- Multiple hollow, tubular upright stems from vigorous crown and deep taproot
- Alternate leaves with 13 to 21 leaflets
- Purple, blue or white pea-like flowers in clusters at the end of the stem

Introduced from the Middle East as a livestock forage plant, Goatsrue proved to be unpalatable and toxic. Flowers range in colors from white, blue to purple.

Biology

- Flowers from June to October
- Reproduces by seed; one plant can produce up to 15,000 seed pods
- Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, rain, animals and human activity
- Seeds remain viable in the soil for at least 5-10 years

Impacts

- Stems and leaves contain a poisonous alkaloid; fatal to humans, sheep and cattle if ingested
- Displaces native and beneficial plants
- Forms monoculture in wetlands
- Impacts wetland wildlife by limiting their food and nesting sources

Goatsrue displaces native plants and its leaves and stems are poisionous.

Distribution

- Limited distribution in King County; tends to grow in wetlands and marshy areas, but has been found along roadsides and open fields
- Prefers full sun, but will tolerate light shade

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program Line: **206-477-WEED**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds

King County

What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to eradicate goatsrue from all areas in the county. Do your part by checking for this noxious weed on your property.

Control Methods

Best results come from using a combination of the control methods listed below and actively monitoring for any new growth. Goatsrue forms dense crowns capable of regenerating for several seasons. It also leaves a long-lived seed bank in the soil.

Goatsrue has a deep taproot. Be careful to remove as much of it as possible so that it doesn't re-sprout.

Manual: For small sites with few plants, pull or dig up plants, careful to remove as much root as possible so the plant will not re-sprout. This method can be highly labor-intensive and to be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so no new seeds are produced.

Mechanical: Mowing, clipping and cutting are not recommended as a sole control measure; goatsrue will flower and produce seeds even when cut short. To be effective, mechanical measures must be followed with herbicide treatment when the plants regrow. However, seed pods can be clipped and disposed of to help prevent the spread of seeds in areas of eradication work.

Chemical: Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label. Selective broadleaf foliar herbicides with the active ingredient of dicamba or 2,4-D and their combinations are very effective. These herbicides work well for lawn or pasture areas as they won't harm grasses. Apply herbicide in early summer, preferably during the bud stage and before goatsrue is flowering; Repeat the application in the fall. When using foliar herbicides, wait until the plant has died completely before removing it. This can take two weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users.

Wild licorice plant

Don't be fooled by the lookalikes:

Goatsrue closely resembles the native plant wild licorice (*Glycyrrhiza lepidota*), which is also somewhat weedy. But unlike goatsrue, eradication is not required for wild licorice. It is commonly found in meadows, pastures, ditches and along river banks. The root of wild licorice is sweet and was an important food source for Native Americans. You can distinguish between the two plants primarily by the stems: goatsrue plants have hollow stems while wild licorice stems are solid. It also has burlike seed pods with hooked bristles; goatsrue has narrow, smooth seed pods.