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Non-Native, Invasive Plants of Cottonwood Creek



Salt Cedar Infestation in the main stem of Cottonwood Creek near Cottonwood, CA (6/2012).

A guide to help landowners and property managers identify and control non-native, invasive plants found in and around Cottonwood Creek.

What are non-native, invasive plants and why is it important to stop the spread of these species?

Not all plants introduced from other places are harmful. The term “invasive” is reserved for the most aggressive plant species that grow and reproduce rapidly, causing major changes to the areas where they become established, and which have a negative effect on our economy, environment, or on human health

The introduction of these plants can lead to problems including increasing the frequency, intensity and effect of fires and floods, contributing to erosion, reducing wildlife forage and habitat, and reducing groundwater availability.



Control of Invasive Species

- ***Prevention:** keep weeds from establishing
- ***Planning:** develop a long-term management plan
- ***Removal:** see below...
- ***Site Rehabilitation:** help desirable plants establish and become more competitive

Removal Techniques

The best practice for controlling non-native, invasive plants often depends on the specific plant you wish to remove. These techniques can include manual or mechanical removal (cutting or hand pulling), chemical removal (use of herbicides), or, often, a combination of both.

Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)



This tree grows up to 100 feet tall and has rough, dark brown bark, smooth, dark green leaves, and fragrant, cream-colored, pea-like flowers that grow in clusters. The fruit is a flattened brownish pod two to four inches long, each containing four to eight seeds. Black Locust creates large stands that displace native vegetation. Its seeds, leaves, and bark are toxic to humans and livestock.

Salt Cedar (*Tamarisk*)



This plant is shrublike, grows to 12 to 15 feet in height, and forms dense thickets. The foliage is gray-green and the plant blooms from March to

September with large numbers of pink to white flowers that appear on branch tips. Salt Cedar increases fire potential, reduces wildlife habitat, has high water use, and increases the deposition of salts on the soil surface. In addition, it increases flooding by changing the way water flows through an area by sending floodwater to disperse and inundate areas that otherwise would not be flooded.

Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*)



A perennial grass that can grow to over 20 feet in height. It has leaves that are 1-2 inches wide and a footlong. Flowers are 2-foot long, dense plumelike panicles. The plants choke riversides and stream channels, interfere with flood control, increase fire potential and reduce groundwater availability. Root and stem fragments can float downstream, take root and initiate new infestations, and quickly invade new areas. Once established, it has the ability to outcompete and completely suppress native vegetation, reducing wildlife forage and habitat.

Scotchbroom (*Cytisus scoparius*)



A bush that can grow up to 9 ft. in height and has green stems and bright yellow, pea-shaped flowers. This plant blocks light and uses up available water. It reduces forage and creates stands which are inaccessible and unpalatable to wildlife. Each plant can produce up to 12,000 seeds – making it difficult to control once established. As the plant grows, the inner stems die back, providing a highly flammable fuel, creating a dangerous fire situation. Broom seeds can spread down streams and roads and severely degrade riparian zones and forest communities.

Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia selloana*)



A grass that can grow up to 8 feet in diameter and height, each with spikes up to 15 feet, capped by fluffy, pale plumes in late summer.

Individual plants can produce 10,000 seeds per plume, and seeds can blow up to 20 miles in the wind. This allows the grass to spread rapidly and become established in new areas. The plant reduces wildlife forage and habitat by displacing native and other vegetation. In addition, it creates a fire hazard with excessive build-up of dry leaves, leaf bases, and flowering stalks.

Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)



A deciduous tree thirty to sixty-five feet high, with gray bark. It has flowers, which are small, greenish, and grow in large clusters at the branch tips. The flowers develop into conspicuous and distinctive clusters of fruits. It was introduced as a landscape ornamental but escapes gardens and spreads by seeds and creeping roots. Tree of Heaven displaces native vegetation along riversides and stream channels.