

Weekly Ag Report
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Morning, this is Tom Getts down at the Extension Office with your Weekly Ag Report.

I would like to talk a little bit about weeds. First off, what are they? How do you define them? Can a plant be a weed in one place, and not in another? What about native plants are they ever weeds? The simple definition is that a weed is a plant that is out of place. Essentially any plant that you don't want to be growing where it is currently growing. Whether it is in your field, on your pasture, or in your front yard, if you don't want it, it's a weed!

Weeds cause all sort of damages in agriculture; such as reducing crop yields, reducing crop quality, increasing production costs, and using water the crop could be using. On rangelands they can: reduce forage quality and quantity, alter fire regimes, and poison livestock. I know it is an old statistic, but in 1991 it was estimated that farmers spent 5 billion dollars on weed control, and that the total cost of weeds in the US ranged from 15-20 billion dollars per year. Weeds don't just affect agricultural production. They invade our forests, grasslands, lakes, rivers, and deserts causing dramatic ecological impacts. Let alone the weeds that grow in town.

So what is the first step to getting rid of your weeds? It is identification! You need to know what the plant is in order to figure out the best way to get rid of it. Identification can be hard, but the University of California has some helpful websites. The Weed Research Information Center at WRIC.ucdavis.edu has a weed identification tool where you can plug in information such as leaf shape, stem shape, flower color, and where you found it, in order to narrow down what it might be. The UC Integrated Pest Management website has a weed photo gallery separating grasses, broadleaf's, and sedges. Oftentimes books can be the best option. The two I use most commonly are *Weeds of the West*, and *Weeds of California and Other Western States*. If you're having trouble identifying a weed, give me a call at 251-2650, and I can help you out.

Once you know what weed you have, then you can look up information on the best ways to control it. The UC IPM website has information about what growth stages to target, mechanical techniques that can work, and what herbicides may be effective.

But remember, the most effective way to control weeds is to prevent them from getting established. Once a plant produces seeds, they can live in the soil for years. Weeds are typically easily controlled when they are young, and in small patches. Once weed populations get large, they are much more difficult and costly to control.

So if you see an unfamiliar plant on your property, figure out what it is before it gets established, because it could be a weed that will just take over!