

**Weekly Ag Report**  
**Tom Getts, UCCE Weed and Cropping Systems Farm Advisor**  
**August 8, 2018**

Good morning, this is Tom Getts down at the Cooperative Extension office with your weekly Ag Report.

We have had ideal conditions for biennial weeds the past two years. Biennial weeds are plants that take two years to complete their growth cycle. The first year, they grow low to the ground, often in what's called a basal rosette, or essentially a ring of leaves. The second year they bolt, or shoot up a flowering stalk, which produces flowers and eventually seeds. Once the plants have bolted, they are much more difficult to control with either a shovel or with herbicides. The one upside of letting weeds get to the bolting stage is that you can easily see them, but this is not recommended.

With our historically wet winter of 2016-17, many biennial noxious weed seeds germinated and grew. This past spring was especially wet, with the moisture starting in February and continuing through May. This was a perfect recipe to feed the biennial weeds, letting them grow large and tall, producing lots of seed this growing season.

Driving around the county there is a whole slew of biennial weeds whose populations have seemingly exploded over the past two years. There are the thistles, musk, Scotch and bull standing tall above the grasses. Dyers woad and Mediterranean sage have certainly reared their heads, and knapweeds like spotted diffuse and squarrose can also be found all around parts of the county.

Ideally, all of these weeds would have been controlled before they set seed. However, we cannot cry about spilt milk, and it is a perfect opportunity to take action and preparation for the next opportunity to control. One of the most difficult aspects on controlling biennial plants is finding them when they are most susceptible to either physical or chemical control. Fall and spring is really the best time to target them, however, that is also the time of year when they grow low and are hidden in the grasses. Right now is a perfect opportunity to see the tall weeds and mark where their populations are. Marking could be done simply with some flags, t-posts, or for the technically savvy a smartphone for GPS.

Mapping your weeds this time of year doesn't just apply to biennial weeds, but marking out all of your weeds this time of year is often easier. Perennial weeds like Canada thistle and tall white top, or annual weeds like medusahead or Russian thistle are much easier to identify now than at smaller growth stages. Knowing where your weeds are can help you get on top of them next year. And, while you are mapping, if any of the weeds are still flowering, kill them now before they set seed! While tedious for small patches of weeds or individual plants, cutting off the seed heads and disposing of them in a plastic bag could pay dividends in weed control efforts down the road. So, get out there and mark some weeds, so you don't forget where they were growing next year.

Until next time...