

# Friends of Dallas-Barnhartvale Nature Park

*A group dedicated to the continued well-being of a valued community resource.*

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ISSUE FIVE

## Pretty Flower, or Noxious Weed?



*Baby's Breath*

*Leafy Spurge*



*Canada Thistle*



*Dalmatian Toadflax*



## What Makes a Plant Undesirable?

### Usually the term noxious weed

is given to a non-native, invasive plant that threatens the ecology of a zone by spreading rapidly and crowding out native plants. **Baby's Breath**, found in some home landscapes and long a favourite of florists, quickly becomes a noxious weed as it aggressively spreads through the delicate ecology of a grassland. In this case the plant, with its superior propagation strategy, poses a threat. After three years, a mature plant can generate between 10,000 to 20,000 airborne seeds.

Other plants may be deemed noxious due to undesirable properties. **Leafy Spurge** gives off a compound that actively inhibits the growth of other plants. It also exudes a latex that causes skin irritation in humans and is toxic to some grazing animals. Cattle will generally avoid eating grass growing amongst Leafy Spurge, reducing the quality of grazing in infested areas.

Another aggressive invader in dry grasslands, **Dalmatian Toadflax** is an

attractive annual with yellow snapdragon-like flowers. Toxic to animals, it spreads through an extensive root system that spreads horizontally as much as 3.7 m (12 feet) from the plant! A mature plant can also produce over 10,000 seeds.

**Hound's Tongue** propagates its seed by attaching to animals and people. Each blossom produces four burred seed nutlets and a single plant can generate 2000 seeds. The plant is toxic and seed infested hay has caused reported cattle deaths in some parts of the world. Much of the infested area in B.C. is in the forested grazing areas, wetlands or water courses of the Thompson Nicola.

**Canada Thistle** can also threaten wetland areas by spreading through a horizontal root system forming dense monocultures, choking out more desirable wetland plants.

**Common Burdock** was the inspiration for the inventor of Velcro. It flourishes in moist areas. Most hikers

have experienced the tenacity of the burrs attached to clothing or their dogs. The burrs also devalue sheep's wool and cause such stress to cattle in their eyes, nose and mouth areas that they suffer weight loss.

There are two common types of **Knapweed** that threaten our grasslands, Spotted and Diffuse. These aggressive plants can reduce natural forage for deer, elk and cattle up to 90% in infested areas. The estimated loss to hay production in B.C. due to this invasive is estimated at \$400,000 each year.

### Can we do anything to help?

Oddly enough, mechanically picking invasives like knapweed or Baby's Breath goes a long way toward helping control them, especially if done before the seed matures. If the seeds are near maturity, it is better to remove the entire plant from the area. If we learn to identify these invasives and routinely pick them on our hikes, we can make a difference!

**NEXT ISSUE**  
PARK  
WETLANDS

You can find [photos of the noxious weeds](#) requiring control in the Park on our website.



**Thanks to all the volunteers who helped remove Baby's Breath from the Park and Blackwell Trails last August!**

