

Weed of The Week:

Saltcedar

(*Tamarix ramosissima*)



Weed description:

Saltcedar, which is also called tamarisk, is native to Eurasia. It can grow as a deciduous or evergreen shrub, or can become a small tree. The height of this weed will range from 5 to 20 feet. It reproduces from seed as well as from underground roots. Although it is a heavy seed producer, the seeds have a very short longevity in the soil, about a year. The bark is a distinctive reddish-brown color and the leaves are small and scale-like. The flowers are pink or white in color and have 5 petals.

Distribution:

Distribution of saltcedar is fairly limited within Arapahoe County at this time with one large infestation known to exist in Cherry Creek State Park. This is not true for the rest of Colorado or the Southwestern United States. Saltcedar is widespread throughout many of the waterways in these areas, infesting millions of acres because it was originally introduced to stabilize stream banks. Now it has escaped cultivation to become a huge problem.



Why is it a problem?

Saltcedar is a major problem to riparian areas because not only does it displace native plants and animals, it also increases the salinity of surface soil, consumes excessive amounts of ground water, widens floodplains, and increase the amount of sediment deposited within a stream channel. By displacing native plants and animals, dense infestations threaten natural ecosystems and nature reserves by fragmenting sensitive plant and animal habitat. This plant is extremely difficult to control because of its resistance to herbicides and extensive underground root system.

If you see this plant within Arapahoe County or would like more information contact:

Russell Johnson
Arapahoe County Weed Control Specialist
10730 E. Briarwood Ave., Suite 100
Centennial, CO 80112
Direct: 720-874-6713
E-mail: rjohnson@co.arapahoe.co.us

