



# What is a weed?

## 1. What are Weeds?

Weeds are plants that grow where they are not wanted. They are plants in the wrong place. Many weeds such as yellow starthistle and knapweed are in the wrong place almost wherever they grow, but some weeds can be useful in certain circumstances.

## 2. Where do weeds come from?

Most of America's weeds come from places with similar climates such as Europe, Eurasia, Asia, Mediterranean, and sometimes from neighboring states within the U.S. An increasing number of weeds are American natives that grow outside their natural range.

## 3. How do weeds get here?

Weeds can hitchhike on camping equipment, shoes and clothing, in food, hay & grain, on car, bike, & ATV tires, machines and animals; they may also be brought here deliberately as ornamental plants or for their commercial value.



## 4. Why do weeds go weedy?

Many weeds are good competitors for light, water, nutrients and space. They grow quickly and reproduce rapidly. Often people help weeds grow by creating conditions that favor them in natural areas and on farms. Many weeds also have protective features such as thorns, spines and poisons which browsing animals sometimes know to avoid. Most weeds are also free of natural predators or parasites in the new areas they invade.

## 5. How do weeds impact on the environment, the economy and people?

Weeds can:

- Change, take over or destroy natural ecosystems and farmlands
- Degrade recreational areas in forest, rivers, rangeland, prairies and lakes
- Reduce the productivity or profitability of agriculture
- Increase soil erosion
- Cause health problems such as poisoning and allergies to people, production animals and pets
- Increase costs to the farmers and grazers who produce our food
- Increase (weed control and other) costs to local government, which are passed on to taxpayers
- Rob native plants of water, nutrients, and light
- Reduce wildlife habitat