

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 8-10-05) Tansy Typhoon. © 2005

Our County Noxious Weed Coordinator Dana Coggon is calling the frenzied spread of a bright yellow weed the “Tansy Typhoon.” If you’ve driven any of our local roads or highways lately you’ve seen a tall nearly fluorescent yellow plant marching in armies all over the county. I asked Dana to write something for my column that I could use and instead of paraphrasing her I’m just quoting the next four paragraphs in Dana’s words. If you want more information contact Dana Monday through Friday at 360-307-4242 or dcoggon@co.kitsap.wa.us.

“Have you seen it? It is coming your way!! Are you ready for the downpour of seeds? This year’s tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) “storm” is one of the worst that has been seen in the last 5-10 years in the Puget Sound region. This year the sea of bright yellow flowers started in early June and is still in full force. It is marching across our county taking over any space available for plant growth.

So what’s the problem with this pretty plant? Tansy ragwort causes loss of pasture for grazing animals, unthrifty livestock, and death of animals. The entire plant contains varying concentrations of poisonous alkaloids in its parts, which cause irreversible liver damage in wildlife and livestock relative to the amount consumed.

How do you spot this yellow storm? It is found along roadsides, rail lines, pastures and backyards. The daisy-like yellow flowers, typically 13 to 15 petals per flower, stand between 3-6 feet tall. The leaves are deeply cut, giving a ragged appearance. It can be distinguished from other plants by counting the yellow petals on the flowers.

How do you prepare and prevent the devastation of the yellow storm? The best control measure is to remove the plant(s) and keep them from going to seed. Good land management practices prevent the growth and spread of tansy ragwort and continued monitoring is necessary to insure that new plants are removed before seed fall can occur. Stopping just one plant this year can prevent the downpour of thousands of new plants next year.”

Still on the topic of weeds, part of why we’re seeing such large populations of our least favorite weeds and noxious weeds is weed seeds can remain dormant for many years. We’ve had many years of long dry conditions. Those seeds have just been napping and now that our spring was so ideally rainy for thirsty plants, the weeds are waking up and spreading everywhere.

If you’re wondering if your weeds are noxious visit our county website http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious_weed/index/htm or the state website at <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/INDEX.htm>. You’ll find excellent photos and descriptions of the weeds, how to eradicate or control them, and why.

If you’re trying to identify a weed or learn how to control it, you can bring the plant in to the Extension Office, 345 Sixth Street, Suite 550, Bremerton (Norm Dicks Government Center) Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed for lunch from 11:30-12:30). It helps to have all parts of the plant – roots, base, stems, leaves and flowers if any are visible. Wear gloves when picking or pulling up weeds, some are toxic causing skin rashes. We’ll take a look at the plant, identify it and will provide information on how to eradicate or control the pesky plant.

Contact Peg in care of this newspaper or email ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us or gardenmentor@yahoo.com