

Spring brings warmer temperatures, melting snow and mud all over our shoes. Life is good! It's the time of year when many of us start thinking about doing a little gardening. We look for plants that will thrive at our elevation and in our short growing season. Whether you are growing a couple of plants in a container on the deck, or a full blown flower bed, there are some things you may want to consider when selecting plants.

Gardening in the mountains can be tough. We have extreme temperature changes, intense sun and low humidity. If you're not careful the \$100 worth of bedding plants you just purchased can get fried in a single afternoon. Some people take the easy way out by encouraging one, if not several of our many noxious weeds to grow in their garden. Plants like Oxeye daisy, Yellow toadflax and Mayweed chamomile require little care and are a cinch to grow. So why not let them go crazy? Well, for starters they are non-native invasive species. What does that mean? It means that someone introduced them to the U.S. either intentionally or unintentionally. They have no natural control agents to keep them in check and most produce large numbers of seeds, thus, out competing native plants **BIG TIME**. What many people don't realize is that unlike native plants, many of the noxious weeds can't be utilized by wildlife. Areas that are infested with weeds are rendered uninhabitable to those creatures we love so much. Take for example the Camp Hale Area. It's currently infested with over 2000 acres of Yellow toadflax which is poisonous to elk and deer. That means limited desirable vegetation for these animals, thus forcing them to move or die. I'm not just saying this to scare you (okay, yes I am) but it's the truth and you can do something to help. **Learn about noxious weeds and how to identify them by visiting CWMA.ORG.** Don't encourage noxious weeds in your yard. If your neighbor has noxious weeds, reach out and teach them about the effects weeds have on the eco-system. We are in this together and it will take all of us to stop the spread.

The City of Leadville is dealing with the noxious weed issue head on. They have a dedicated staff to treat weeds and help folks identify and control the weeds on their property. If you have questions about the City's program give Jim Schneider a call at (719) 486-1166 and he can help you out.

One last thing, if Dandelions are driving you crazy simply dig them up or treat them with an over the counter product like Weed –Be-Gone (not Roundup). Dandelions are not noxious weeds but can be obnoxious to some, but don't hate the lowly Dandelion too much because little creatures like bees and chipmunks really utilize them.



Escaped Oxeye Daisy on right-of-way.



Oxeye Daisy Close-up



Yellow Toadflax