

Invasive Plants in the McKenzie Watershed By Megan Finnessy, Council Coordinator

Invasive, non-native plants are a growing problem throughout the McKenzie watershed. Non-native plants arrive by a number of means including from seeds lodged in a boot sole or motor vehicle tire tread, mixed in with agricultural products brought in from outside the area, and sometimes deliberately planted by gardeners. If the weeds find local growing conditions similar to those from their place of origin they may proliferate, edging out native plants and eventually taking over whole areas of suitable habitat. The more they spread the more difficult they are to control, and in some cases may become impossible to completely eradicate. Typical eradication methods include hand pulling, mowing and applying herbicides.

Non-native, noxious plants growing out of control can do considerable damage both environmentally and economically. By out-competing native vegetation, they eliminate the plant species needed by wildlife for food and shelter, and create biologically poor monocultures. Non-native plants may also have negative economic impacts. For example, livestock forage may be replaced by less nutritious or unpalatable plants. Noxious weed infestations can also hamper the growth of newly planted trees on industrial timberlands.

There are five major invasive, non-native plants within the McKenzie Watershed that landowners should be aware of, and take action to control if found on their property. They are: English Ivy, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Blackberry, Reed Canary Grass and Scot's Broom.

To learn more about controlling noxious weeds, or the projects and activities of the McKenzie Watershed Council, contact watershed council Projects Coordinator Juan Welsh at (541) 687-9076.