

Salt Cedar

Tamarix ramosissima and *T. chinensis*

Currently in Montana, noxious weeds infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction, these non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Salt Cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima* and *T. chinensis*) was introduced to North America from Eurasia and Africa as an ornamental shrub and served as a wind break in the 1800s. During the Great Depression, millions of saltcedar plants were planted on the Great Plains to help combat soil loss through erosion. Saltcedar is often referred to as tamarisk; which is Latin and references the Tamaris River in Spain where the plant was known to grow. Saltcedar is recognized by slender branches and gray-green foliage that resembles juniper (or cedar). New growth on branches is smooth, reddish-brown in color, turns bluish-purple and becomes ridged as the plant ages. This plant has a deep taproot, can tolerate alkali soils and thrives in soils with a high saline content. The leaves are often encrusted with salt secretions and if you were to taste them, they would taste salty. Saltcedar blooms from March to September; flowers are pink to white, have five petals and bloom in dense clusters on 2" spikes at the ends of branches. When pollinated, each spike can produce up to 600,000 small seeds that are held in a capsule within a fruit that has a small tuft of hairs on the tip to aid in spreading the seed. In addition to seeds, reproduction occurs through stems that are located below the soil. Throughout Montana, saltcedar can be found along stream banks, reservoir shores and other areas where there is water. Young plants need to be exposed to moist soil for long periods of time to ensure survival. Saltcedar outcompetes native shrubs and trees because it establishes dense mats of seedlings on areas that have recently been flooded.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at (406) (Phone number). Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.