Toxic, Noxious Weeds

Dry material of some toxic plants remains toxic for years. It is best to dispose of toxic, noxious weeds to prevent accidental exposure and poisoning. Poisonous plants left on site could harm people as well as animals that may feed on the dead plants.

For all toxic, noxious weeds, wear protective clothing and eye protection to prevent accidental exposure. Do not compost or put in yard waste.

Examples of toxic, noxious weeds

Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)–Remains toxic for several years after being pulled. Bag and remove entire plants.

Tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)–Dried plants are more palatable to animals so be sure to remove plant material from pasture area. Toxicity of the plant remains when it is dried and baled in hay.

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)–Wear protective clothing and eyewear–do not touch plant parts as they contain a toxic sap. Carefully bag plants and dispose.

Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)–Watch out for the seeds that readily stick to clothing and shoes. Plants should be removed from site as dried plant parts are still toxic.

Spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*)–Clip and bag stems with seeds to avoid inadvertently dispersing the seed during control work.

Giant hogweed flowerhead with seeds being bagged for disposal. Use a strong plastic bag.

Thomas B. Denholm, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

Aquatic plants

Noxious weed control in aquatic areas typically requires a permit, please contact your county noxious weed control board to learn more before controlling aquatic noxious weeds.

A number of aquatic noxious weeds, like Eurasian milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Brazilian elodea (*Egeria densa*) can be dried out on dry land, far away from water, and when dry, composted or added to gardens. Make sure to contain all plant parts while transporting plants as many aquatic, noxious weeds can spread vegetatively by small plant fragments.

King County NWCB

Washington Administrative Codes (WAC)

Sections WAC 16-752-620 and WAC 16-752-515 of Washington's quarantine law allow the transport of quarantined noxious weeds for the purpose of disposal to sanitary landfills and other appropriate locations.

Contact Us

If you have questions about disposing noxious weeds or noxious weeds in general, we can help. Please contact us at:

WA State Noxious Weed Control Board
P.O. Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504
360-725-5764
http://www.nwcb.wa.gov
Email: noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov

Or contact your local county noxious weed control board:

WEED'EM OUT

NOXIOUS WEEDS DAMAGE OUR RESOURCES

This brochure is based on Guidelines for Disposal of Terrestrial Invasive Plants by The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the University of Connecticut, 2011; Methods for Disposing Non-Native Invasive Plants, Invasives Species Outreach Group, University of New Hampshire 2010.

Cover image: Frances Lucero, King County NWCB

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board

Noxious Weed Disposal

what to do with noxious weed material

Disposal methods of noxious weed material can vary depending on the plant species, growth stage of the plant and quantity of plant material.

Disposing noxious weed material

Controlling noxious weeds can generate small to large amounts of plant material. Properly managing and handling this material, as well as soil that may contain roots or seeds, will help prevent the spread and reestablishment of these noxious weeds. Conduct as much noxious weed control as possible before plants flower and develop seed. Also, by controlling noxious weeds earlier in the season, before they are finished growing, there will be less plant material to manage.

For questions about disposal and control options, contact your county noxious weed control board for information and assistance that is specific to your county. Some counties have specific disposal requirements or provide financial assistance to residents disposing their noxious weeds.

General Techniques

If plants are flowering, cut and bag flowers when possible to prevent seed development and dispersal. Seal bags and put them in the trash. Noxious weeds that are treated with herbicide may be left in place with some exceptions (see toxic, noxious weed information).

Woody and Herbaceous Material: Small amounts of woody plant material that do not have seeds and do not spread vegetatively, can be controlled by pulling or cutting plants and leaving them on site with roots exposed to dry, making a brush pile, chipping or burning. If seeds are present, leave on site and pile and cover with a tarp or burn, and monitor the area for new plants.

For small amounts of herbaceous materials that do not have seeds and do not spread vegetatively, plants can be composted, pulled and bagged, pulled or cut and left on site to dry with roots exposed (as long as plants are not toxic).

For large amounts of material without seeds, pull or cut plants then pile, tarp and monitor the area for any re-sprouting material.

Drying: Plant parts without flowers or seeds that will not spread vegetatively, can be left on the ground and monitored as they dry out. Plant parts that don't have flowers or seeds but may still spread vegetatively should be left on tarps, pavement or other surfaces that prevent them from taking root in the soil.

Pile and Tarp: For large amounts, pile plant material on sheet of plastic or tarp and securely cover with another tarp to prevent light and water from reaching plant parts and to keep plant parts contained. Leave plants tarped until material is completely dried out.

Bag and Trash: For toxic plants and small infestations of noxious weeds, the entire plant can be removed and sealed into a plastic trash bag and disposed. When possible, allow bagged plants to rot in a sunny location, then dispose of in regular trash.

Municipal Yard Waste: Some city compost facilities may be hot enough to kill noxious weed material. Contact your local county noxious weed control board or waste management to see if this option is available.

When moving noxious weeds in a vehicle for disposal, make sure to secure plant material so none can escape during transport. Clean the vehicle and equipment of any noxious weed material to prevent the spread of seeds and vegetative parts. Also remember to clean your shoes and clothing of any seeds, plant parts and soil that may contain noxious weed seed and propagating plant parts.

Chipping and Compost: Woody plants that do not spread vegetatively can be chipped and left on site to compost. Chip before plants flower and develop seed.

Burning: May be an option, especially for large amounts of plant material. However, burn only in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and ordinances and permits. Monitor weather conditions prior to ignition to avoid hazardous fires. It is not advisable to burn some plants, such as toxic plants.

Composting at Home

Most home compost piles do not get hot enough to kill seeds or plants, so only add noxious weeds that do not have flowers or seeds and do not spread vegetatively. Do not home compost toxic plants. A number of our noxious weeds can spread vegetatively by plant fragments. For example, roots, stems and leaf parts of these species can develop roots and sprout new plants, which can escape compost piles as well as illegal dump sites and spread into natural areas. Do not put these noxious weeds in home compost piles. Periodically monitor your compost area for any escaping weeds.

Examples of vegetatively spreading noxious weeds: yellow archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), knotweeds: Japanese, Bohemian, giant and Himalayan, (*Polygonum cuspidatum*, *P.* x *bohemicum*, *P. sachalinense*, *P. polystachyum*) and four selections of English ivy (*Hedera helix* 'Baltica', *Hedera helix* 'Pittsburgh, and *Hedera helix* 'Star'; *Hedera hibernica* 'Hibernica').

Yellow archangel growing in a natural area from illegal yard waste dumping. Cut stems can form roots at the leaf nodes and quickly grow and take over a new area.