

## The annoying bur buttercup



A patch of flowering bur buttercup

Standing in my back yard, I determined which weed is the most annoying. Forget tamarisk clogging miles of river banks, forget five-foot tall bull thistle, forget piles of Russian thistle, mats of medusahead or even the pure stands of hoary cress. All it takes is one barefoot walk through my back yard to know it is bur buttercup.

Last year was the year I was going to eradicate it. But it was April before I got around to calling Jack Pryer, certified weed sprayer who does a lot of spraying for the Jiggs Conservation District. He told me I was too late, bur buttercup must be sprayed while it flowers which is generally during March. When I told Jack I had not seen any flowers, he remarked on my observational powers and told me to wait until next year.

So this spring was to be the year. I was on top of things, ready to search for those tiny flowers, although I quickly realized there would be no long search. My back yard is so thick with bur buttercup, it carries a yellowish tinge. At this point, I have given up eradicating bur buttercup and hope to partially control this weed outbreak.

Bur buttercup is a tiny plant, no more than 2-5 inches tall. The leaves are fleshy finger-like segments said to resemble crow's feet. I spotted the first yellow, buttercup-like flowers around the middle of March. Any plants not killed now, will soon develop spiny, brown burrs that even keep our dogs away.

A 2,4-D herbicide is effective, but only during flowering. Once the burrs form, spraying does nothing. Jack assured me it can be eliminated so I sprayed inside my fence. The problem is mats of bur buttercup surround my yard. My only hope at permanent eradication will be planting something to cover the bare ground.

Doug Clarke is Vice President of the Spring Creek Region Cooperative Weed Management Area. He agrees bur buttercup ranks high on the annoyance scale but it is not high on their list of treated weeds. Several other weeds cause major economic and environmental damage in Spring Creek. He also agrees with me that this looks like a good year for bur buttercup, a bad year for us.

If your property has bur buttercup, today is the day to attack it, not tomorrow. It would be nice to walk barefoot across the yard again.

Elko Daily Free Press, "Nature Notes", 4/8/2011

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