

Invasive Weed Q & A

Q. How do you manage invasive weeds in the natural areas in Highlands Ranch?

A. We use an integrated approach in managing invasive weeds in our natural areas. Depending on the time of year and the climatic conditions, we use one or more of the following strategies:

- *Biological* – the use of insects and other biological controls.
- *Cultural* – the enhancement of desirable vegetation.
- *Physical & Mechanical* – the removal or mowing of undesirable broadleaf weeds.
- *Selective Herbicides* – There is a small window of opportunity to use herbicides in late spring and early fall. The Metro District staff is licensed by the Colorado Department of Agriculture to apply herbicides.

Q. What is the growing pattern like?

A. Native grasses and invasive weeds have grown fast and tall this summer as a result of the spring snows and above average precipitation. As the summer progresses, the cool season grasses will go dormant while the invasive weeds will continue to grow and develop seed heads.

Q. Why is it necessary to mow invasive weeds?

A. Selective annual mowing of invasive weeds in natural areas is necessary to minimize mature seed development and dispersal and invasive weed plant establishment. By selective mowing, we cut only invasive weeds and leave strands of native grass that are doing well, therefore it gives the appearance of patch work mowing.

Q. How do you mow invasive weeds?

A. We mow invasive weeds at a height that is above the living portion of native grasses. This will in the long-term give the advantage to native grasses as they are not damaged.

Q. How prevalent are invasive weeds?

A. Invasive weeds are capable of producing millions of seeds that have the propensity to lay dormant in the soil for up to ten years. During drought years these seeds will germinate and the plants will out-compete native grasses. These plants are very difficult if not impossible to eradicate once established.

Q. What is the vegetation like in our native areas?

A. Our native areas contain both cool and warm season grasses.

Q. What is the growth pattern of cool season grasses?

A. Cool season grasses start their growth early in the spring and continue growth for as long as rains and cool temperatures prevail. They will go dormant during the hot, dry months of summer and start growth again in the cool months of fall if moisture is adequately filling some of the areas that were selectively mowed.

Q. What is the growth pattern of warm season grasses?

A. Warm season grasses will come out of dormancy in mid-spring and grow during the hot summer months. Because of their extensive root system, these plants are very drought tolerant, they will stay green during dry conditions and will go dormant in the fall after a freeze and will provide a display of fall colors.

Q. What rules or regulations does the Metro District follow as it pertains to invasive weed management?

A. The Metro District complies with the Colorado Noxious Weed Act (3.5-5.5-101-119 C.R.S.) which enables county and city governments to implement management programs aimed at combating invasive weeds from taking over.

Q. Where can I find a list of invasive weed species?

A. for a complete list of species on the Noxious Weed List, visit the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Web site at www.colorado.gov/ag/csd.

Q. Where can I get more information about the native areas in Highlands Ranch?

A. Check out the Open Space Information Center online at www.highlandsranch.org. This Information Center can answer other questions you have pertaining to our Best Management Practices, Outdoor Recreational Experiences or Living With Nature as Your Neighbor.

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