

## Why These Three Plants?

There are many noxious weed species in Arapahoe County but dalmatian toadflax, leafy spurge and diffuse knapweed are growing well in a number of locations. Based on what has been documented elsewhere in Colorado and throughout the United States, this is not a surprise. Leafy spurge infests 5 million acres in 29 states, diffuse knapweed infests over 3 million acres in the western U.S., and dalmatian toadflax is found in 22 states, including over 11,000 acres in Colorado. In Arapahoe County leafy spurge infests nearly 4000 acres, diffuse knapweed infests about 500 acres and dalmatian toadflax inhabits around 50 acres. Their vigorous growth habits, extensive root systems, resistance to most herbicides, excessive seed production and seed distribution methods make these plants enemy number one to rangeland, cropland, and native habitat within Arapahoe County.

## New Invaders to Colorado

It is often said that the cheapest form of weed control is to prevent weeds from becoming established in the first place. So in addition to dealing with existing weed problems, it is very important to still look for new invasive weeds that could possibly come into



**Above:** A mature yellow starthistle flower in Denver. (Photo by E. Lane)

Arapahoe County. Species such as Mediterranean sage, yellow starthistle or orange hawkweed are known to be problems in other areas of the country and now that they are starting to pop up in different areas of Colorado, every effort should be made to eradicate these new infestations before they spread to other locations. Unfortunately there are other species to be on the look out for besides these three examples. Arapahoe County has yet to see any of these new invaders, however, it's only a matter of time before they show up.

## How Severe is the Weed Problem?

Noxious weeds are silently devastating land in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, invasive species infest over 133 million acres of land, both public and private, and cost our country in excess of \$138 billion annually. There seems to be little hope for improvement to these numbers since the latest estimates are that invasive species are increasing at a rate of 1.7 million acres per year. Colorado is not immune



Did you know that invasive species cause \$138 Billion in economic damage to our country each year?

from this as over 700,000 acres were reported by the Colorado Department of Agriculture as being infested with noxious weeds in 2002 and Arapahoe County reported just over 6500 acres. These numbers are a concern because it shows that the potential is there for many more acres to be consumed if allowed to go unchecked.



**Above:** Leafy spurge growing out of control in Coal Creek.

## For More Information Contact:



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# Troublesome Weeds of Arapahoe County

