

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

Indigo bush
Amorpha fruticosa

Other common names: False indigo bush, bastard indigo, desert false indigo, river-locust

USDA symbol: AMFR
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Indigo bush is a native prairie shrub previously used for soil stabilization and wildlife plantings nation-wide. It has been planted extensively along the Columbia River system east of The Dalles that now serves as a seed source for the lower river system. It forms dense thickets that out-compete native.

Distribution in Oregon: Indigo bush grows abundantly along the Columbia River from Portland and upstream to where the Columbia River enters Oregon. It is less abundant on the lower Columbia River wetlands.

Description: It is a deciduous perennial shrub native to the Great Plains. Indigo bush grows up to 13 feet high with a width that is typically twice its height. The older branches are woody; young twigs are green and hairy. Leaves have 13 to 25 leaflets each and are 1 to 2 inches long, dotted and hairy. Flowers are showy-lavender colored, densely arranged in erect racemes each with a single petal and yellow anthers. The fruit is a small, straight to curved pod with one to two seeds within. Pods remain buoyant for over a week in water. A legume, it produces its own nitrogen giving it an advantage in low nitrogen environments such as gravel bars.

Impacts: Common along streams and prairie draws, indigo bush forms dense thickets excluding other native vegetation, recreation and river access. Indigo bush removal is expensive due to restrictions on herbicide use near water and the volumes of woody debris that must be treated or removed in mechanical operations. Indigo bush aggressively colonizes riverbanks and riparian zones, canyons and seeps outcompeting native shrubs and trees that provide food for beaver and deer. In Oregon, the infestations are most prolific in the willow zone, negatively impacting willow-dependent birds, such as yellow warblers and willow flycatchers.

Biological controls: As it is native to the U.S. there are no approved biological control agents.

