

# Invasive Plant Management in Historic Cemeteries

A common and frustrating problem in historic cemeteries is overgrown invasive plants. These plants can inhibit access to and visibility of graves, crack or damage markers and create other problems in cemeteries. Presidential Executive Order 13112 (February 2009) states *“An invasive species is defined as a species that is 1) non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and 2) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health (USDA, 2022).”*

Invasive plants can be both non-native and native plants, which are able to establish on many ecological sites, grow quickly and spread rapidly due to few or no natural mechanisms to control them. Many invasive plants are also labeled noxious weeds, which are defined as *“any plant or plant product that can directly or indirectly injure or cause damage to crops, livestock, poultry, or other interests of agriculture, irrigation, navigation, the natural resources of the United States, the public health, or the environment (USDA NRCS, 2022).”*

Invasive plants and/or noxious weeds within historic cemeteries can be a continual problem for cemetery

managers, as well as those who are trying to clean and restore abandoned cemeteries. They spread so quickly and easily that if they are not managed within the cemetery grounds they can spread onto neighboring properties as well, creating further problems. There are numerous examples from around the state of various invasive species such as blackberries, poison oak, yellow star thistle and many others overrunning historic cemeteries. In some instances, these invasive plants were originally planted with the intent to beautify the cemetery, but over the years some have overtaken headstones, fences, trees, etc., as the case with English ivy.

Controlling these invasive plants and treating them is difficult, time consuming, and often expensive. This is especially a problem for historic cemeteries that are maintained by volunteers working on very limited budgets. Therefore, we have put together a list of resources for cemetery managers, caretakers, and volunteers to provide them with resources on how to treat invasive species as well as potential grants or financial resources help to address with this workload.

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There are multiple state and federal agencies that have handouts, books, websites dedicated to information on identifying and controlling invasive plants and/or noxious weeds in Oregon. We have provided those below. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has compiled profiles of the weeds listed by the Oregon State Weed Board, and these are listed on line with information about the weed, images and locations within the state. There is map available for Oregon that shows the distribution of current and historical state-listed noxious weed data. Each county in Oregon also has a County Weed Department and they are often an invaluable source of information.



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Some even have grants or other programs to provide technical and financial assistance with treatment methods, to those who are dealing with noxious weeds. We recommend reaching out to your local weed department or cooperative weed management area to see if they can assist with your treatment and management plan. There is also the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Weed Grant Program for landowners and managers to help assist with noxious weed treatment.

During your management of invasive plants in historic cemeteries, make sure to be cautious around stones and consider how various treatment methods could impact the stones or markers. Please reference [OCHC Heritage Bulletin 3](#) for more information on plant removal. If plants are attached to the monument *DO NOT* pull them off! Some herbicides or other treatments may also impact the stones or markers; therefore, make sure to ask the local weed representatives how your treatment plan could impact stone, wood, metal, etc. Some work may need to be done by hand rather than spraying if it is in close proximity to the stones. Another alternative to spraying the weeds or pulling them would be to use other grasses or other species that outcompete the invasive plants and could help create a more easily manageable cemetery. This is especially the case in areas that may have bare earth. Seeding those areas with more desirable species that outcompete the invasive plants would be a preferred and potentially less expensive alternative.

## Noxious Weed Control Resources for Oregon

- OSU Extension Service <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/pests-weeds-diseases/invasive-species>
- Oregon Department of Agriculture: Noxious Weed Profiles <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/weeds/oregonnoxiousweeds/pages/aboutoregonweeds.aspx>
- Oregon Department of Agriculture: About Noxious Weed Control <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/weeds/pages/aboutweeds.aspx>
- 2021 Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/weed>
- County Weed Departments in Oregon – click on your county in the map for contact information: <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/Weeds/Pages/CountyWeed-Programs.aspx>
- Cooperative Weed Management Areas in Oregon – click on the map for contact information: <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/Weeds/Pages/CWMA.aspx>
- Oregon State Weed Board Grant Program – open to landowners and managers fighting noxious weeds: <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/Weeds/Pages/GrantProgram.aspx>

- Oregon Noxious Weed Brochures <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/Weeds/Pages/WeedsResources.aspx>
- Invasive Weed Identification and Management <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/ec1563.pdf>
- Oregon Weed Distribution in Weed Mapper <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/weeds/pages/weedmapper.aspx>

## References

- United States Department of Agriculture. (2022) *Executive Order for Invasive Species*. <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/executive-orders-invasive-species>
- United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. (2022) *Federal Noxious Weeds*. [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/import-information/permits/plant-pests/sa\\_noxious\\_weeds/ct\\_federal\\_noxious\\_weeds\\_home](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/import-information/permits/plant-pests/sa_noxious_weeds/ct_federal_noxious_weeds_home)

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