

Silent Invaders

The BLM works to keep our public lands healthy and productive. Sometimes that's not an easy job.

One challenge the BLM faces is invasive plants. These plants are not native to North America. Nonnative plants are plants from other areas that have been introduced into different ecosystems.

Invasive plants can spread rapidly because no insects, diseases, or other predators evolved alongside them to control their growth. As they spread, the native plants that grow naturally in an area—and the wildlife that depends on them—are pushed out. When they grow in or near water, invasive plants can turn lakes and rivers into marshy areas where fish can't live.

Scientists estimate that invasive plants are spreading on our public lands in the West at a rate of almost 4,600 acres per day. That's about 3,500 football fields! Spreading at that rate, invasive plants could cover an area about the size of Delaware in just 1 year.

—You Can Help!—



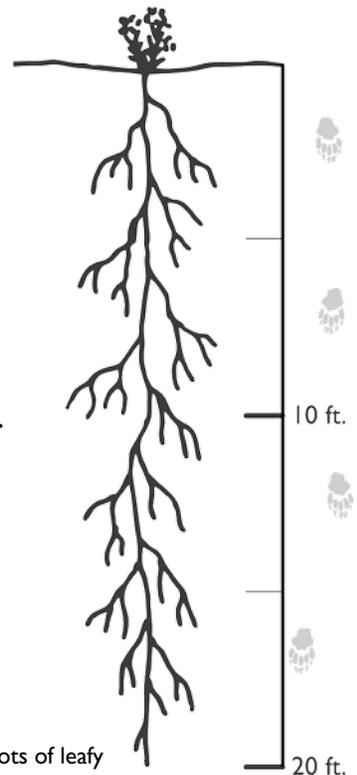
Stop Invasive Plants!

Invasive plants are costly to remove or control. That's why the BLM needs your help to prevent them from becoming a problem in the first place. Here are a few things you can do to help:

- Learn which invasive plants are present in your area and how to identify and report them.
- Check your clothes, shoes, and backpack for seeds before heading home after hiking or playing outside. Don't forget to check your dog! Carefully place any seeds in a trash bin.
- Find out if your favorite outdoor area has a volunteer cleanup day. Pulling invasive plants can be fun!
- Don't pick unknown flowers—they might be invasive plants and picking them might spread the seeds.

How do invasive plants spread rapidly?

- Some have very long root systems, which makes it easier for the plants to get water. (See illustration at right.)
- Other invasive plants are tall and bushy and produce thousands of seeds. Those seeds can travel great distances by wind or water or hitchhike on animals, vehicles, and people.
- Some invasive plants grow tall very quickly, which keeps the sun from reaching smaller, slower-growing native plants.



The roots of leafy spurge, an invasive plant, can reach depths of more than 20 feet!