

Teasel: Highly Invasive and Spreading Across Long Grove. Action Needed Now!

Summer brings with it sun, fun, good times – and unwelcome invaders. One of these is 6 ft. tall, can smother your lawn, produces 6,000 offspring every year, and has a root that grows to the center of the earth (well not quite that long, but it does have taproot as long as 2 ft.). The invader is Teasel.

We have all seen this plant growing along roadsides, ditches, and at the edge of lawns when it becomes most obvious in mid to late summer. The 6 ft. tall stalks (canes) bear an average of 12 sharp bristle-like cones (in the past, these were used to card wool).

One of the problems with controlling this exotic invasive is that the first response when people see the plant in this mid to



Mature teasel – this has flowered, set seed, and dropped the seed.

late-summer stage (after it flowers) is to mow it down. This, however, is counterproductive. Left to itself, the plant drops seed in a 5 ft. radius. When mowed, the mower typically sprays seed over the adjacent area and carries seed on the mower's deck for quite a distance. Essentially, mowing is equivalent to overseeding a wide area with teasel.

Teasel is a biennial “plus”: the first year's growth is a low, flat rosette of leaves. The plant does not flower or produce seed in this year. As the plant population spreads, these rosettes form a carpet that smothers anything else in the area.

The second year's growth is the tall stalk (cane) that catches your attention. This is the flower and seed producing form. If



First year rosettes



Second year's stalk- just as it starts to "bolt". It has not yet flowered; spraying is effective.

it is allowed to mature and flower, then the plant dies. But, if it is mowed, it simply regrows – again and again- until it flowers and produces seed.

The deep taproot makes hand pulling difficult even for small infestations. Two alternate control approaches are recommended. For the first year rosettes and canes that have **not** flowered, apply sprays of glyphosate (RoundUp). Once the second year plants have flowered, spraying is **no longer effective**, as despite the spray the plant will set seed. At this stage, control becomes physical: you will need to cut off the seed heads, bag them, and dispose of them in the trash. Do not try to compost them.

If you have an infestation near your home that is left to spread, the low growing rosette

of first year plants will smother everything in their path. Those plants along roadsides and ditches will eventually find their way to your home, as the seed remains viable for up to 10 years, is easily carried by water, and, as mentioned earlier is also carried by mowers used to cut the canes after flowering. We urge you to take action and declare war on this invader – and enlist your neighbors in the battle. Once the first skirmish is won, the war continues due to the long-term viability of seed and the ease with which the seed germinates in the bare ground left behind by teasel rosettes. To help stop the re-colonization of the bare ground by teasel, spread appropriate seed- native grasses, lawn grasses, or your favorite prairie wildflowers.



Second year in bloom – at this stage it is too late to spray – physical removal of seed head is the needed control.

For more detailed information, see <http://mdc.mo.gov/your-property/problem-plants-and-animals/invasive-plants/common-and-cut-leaved-teasel-control> .