

Dear Sam,

We've noticed a few saltcedar plants along the shore of the pond behind our house. They look beautiful in the winter and summer and seem to do just fine without us having to do any care for them. A neighbor said they are a noxious weed. What should I do?

– *W. Young, Kaycee, Wyoming*

Dear W.,

Saltcedar, also known as tamarisk, was first introduced in the United States from Eurasia as a beautiful ornamental shrub for horticulture purposes. Unfortunately, it escaped domestication and has taken a foothold along streams and other waterways, particularly in the southwestern United States and the West as a whole, including Wyoming. As the name saltcedar suggests, it can tolerate alkaline and salty soils exceptionally well. It displaces our native vegetation creating monocultures that severely limit wildlife diversity. Further, saltcedar is a huge water consumer. It has been documented that year-round running streams have dried up because of saltcedar's ability to capture this water. It's been estimated saltcedars in the Southwest consume twice as much water each year as all the major cities of southern California combined. So, all things considered, your neighbor is right! Tamarisk is a designated noxious weed in Wyoming, and your few plants need to be controlled before they become a huge monoculture.

Young plants can be controlled by hand pulling. The shoots you pull up might be growing off a larger underground root system, so don't be surprised if new plants pop up in the same spot. If you persistently pull young shoots, you will eventually starve the larger root system. Larger plants require a combination of mechanical and chemical control. Cut-stump treatments involve cutting the tamarisk with a saw and immediately treating the stump with herbicide. Contact your local weed and pest control district office regarding the appropriate herbicide to use and what cost-share benefits they can offer. The stump should be treated within a minute after cutting the plant. If you wait longer, the chemical might not make it to the root system, and the plant may resprout. For dense stands in which cutting individual plants is impractical, wait until late summer/early fall to spray. Get going on this W.!

Sincerely,

Sam

ask
Sam

This column features questions from landowners submitted via the Web site. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to Barnyards and Backyards!