

# PULLING, MOWING, BURNING CAN HELP STOP WEED SPREAD AFTER GOING TO SEED

Fighting weeds on a property is always a good and noble fight, but sometimes life happens and a few of those pesky weed species complete their life cycle and go to seed.

The fight is not over. There are still ways to help stop the spread of weeds, even after they have gone to seed.

Proper identification is the first step when tackling any weed issue. The growth habits of the plants can make a big difference how one can and should effectively clean them up. *Barnyards and Backyards* has done several FANTASTIC articles on weed identification for further reference, and if you still have trouble identifying, your county weed and pest office would be

more than happy to help. Visit [bit.ly/weedandpestoffices](http://bit.ly/weedandpestoffices).

Once identified, the goal is to stop the spread of seeds and new weeds from establishing for the coming years. The first step is getting rid of existing seeds and preventing the production of future seeds. There are multiple ways to do this. These methods include pulling, mowing, and burning.

## PULLING

Pulling weeds is the oldest form of weed control and with annual and biannual plants, can be one of the most effective ways to gain control. Annual and biennial weeds only reproduce by seed, so capturing the seeds is of utmost importance when pulling. Pulling can also be an effective way to control simple perennials because the entire root can be removed. Bagging the pulled material for disposal ensures the pulled weeds won't spout somewhere else. Pulling is not recommended for creeping perennials because they reproduce by seed and creeping roots, rhizomes, and stolons, which can be difficult to control by pulling alone.

## MOWING

Mowing, like pulling, can be a great way to get rid of seeds and weedy debris. Bag the material to help remove viable seeds and prevent future weed infestations. Mowing can remove the weed inflorescence (the cluster of flowers that form seeds) prior to seed production to help prevent seeds from developing. The inflorescence can be bagged or not. If your mower is not equipped to bag the clippings, thoroughly clean the mower to prevent further spreading the weed species via seeds or viable roots that remain in the undercarriage of the mower. Grazing can be used in a similar fashion to mowing, but keep in mind some seeds remain viable after passing through the digestive tracts of some animals. Also consider strategically mowing not infested first and saving weed-infested turf areas last to reduce the spread of weeds.

## BURNING

Weed burning can also be a great way to get rid of weed species. When using fire for weed control, you do not have to discard the pulled or clipped material compared to pulling or mowing. But, there are several safety concerns that need addressed, such as weather, fire restrictions, communication with the



Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale* L.)

local fire department in case they get reports of fires, and having some sort of water supply handy to put out hot spots.

## WHAT TO DO WITH THE BIOMASS AFTER REMOVAL?

After pulling or mowing, you could end up with quite the pile of dead plant material. Oftentimes, people till or compost decaying plant material, adding essential nutrients back into the soil. But when dealing with weed species, particularly noxious weeds, using this material is never a good idea because these practices could further spread the infestation.

Many community landfills take plant material and compost them. These piles often reach higher heats than a home compost pile. But, when working with noxious weeds, talk with landfill officials beforehand for their recommendations.

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We wonder if **Jess Butler** has a photograph on his office wall of a weed with a red X through it. He is the assistant supervisor of the Converse County Weed and Pest Control District and can be reached at (307) 358-2775 or [ccwp@qwestoffice.net](mailto:ccwp@qwestoffice.net).

## Quick Tip of the Day: Puncturevine (goatheads)

Puncturevine (right) has a very hard seed with spines. Growing up I, like many other children, had many flat tires on my bike because of this plant. If unable to treat this plant before it goes to seed, or are fighting it in an area that has been infested, take an old piece of carpet and drag it over the area in the fall. The seeds that are on the surface of the soil will get caught in the carpet. This will help deplete the seed bed in the coming years and save many bike tires.



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## Resources

Barnyards & Backyards weed information website, [bit.ly/weed-resources](http://bit.ly/weed-resources)

Wyoming Weed Watchlist, B-1227, [bit.ly/wyo-weeds](http://bit.ly/wyo-weeds)

Wyoming Weed Control in Turf and Ornametals, B-1257, [bit.ly/wyo-turf-weeds](http://bit.ly/wyo-turf-weeds)

Weed Control in Gardens and Lawn, B-909R, [bit.ly/weed-control-lawns](http://bit.ly/weed-control-lawns)

Weed Problems YouTube playlist, [bit.ly/wyo-weed-videos](http://bit.ly/wyo-weed-videos)

