

Correct identification of weeds a critical step

By Brian Mealor

Have you ever found a plant growing in your field or pasture but was not quite sure what it was and whether you should worry about it?

Correct identification of a weed is a critical first step toward developing a management strategy to fit a situation. A helpful tool to aid in identifying weeds is the University of Wyoming Weed Identification Site found online at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/WYOWEED/wyoweed.htm>.

The updated Web site includes brief descriptions, distinguishing characteristics,

and color photographs of more than 80 weed species. Weeds included on the site range from those common in Wyoming, like leafy spurge and kochia, to those that are problematic in other states but currently uncommon in our state like yellow star-thistle and rush skeletonweed (see 'Why list weeds' at right).

Users can easily search for plants by flower color or by species name. The site also has links to find other useful information about weed identification and management.

Visit the site periodically because we will continue to update photographs and information as more becomes available.

This spring, if you find a plant you do not immediately recognize, visit the Wyoming Weed Identification Site and see if it matches any of the species.

Brian Mealor, an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Sciences, is the invasive weed specialist for the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. He can be contacted at (307) 766-3113 or bamealor@uwyo.edu.

Why list weeds not present in Wyoming?

Many states neighboring Wyoming have extensive infestations of weeds that are not a problem here yet. Vigilantly searching for new weed populations allows management actions before the infestations become well-established. The probability of successful management is increased if new populations are controlled early, so familiarize yourself with these weeds and contact your local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office (county contact information is at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp>) or weed and pest control district (district contact information at www.wyoweed.org/addresses.html) upon finding a new weed in a place you have not seen it before.