

# Leave No Weeds

*A conservation and education campaign based on the Leave No Trace principles*



**Weeds are one of the leading threats to conservation of native species.** What is a weed, and what's the problem? How do people spread weeds?



People have always moved plants around the planet, for agriculture, horticulture, or by accident. In the last century, the rate of introductions has increased dramatically. When plants are brought to a very new place (like to North America from Eastern Europe), some of them become weeds. That is, they are able to live on their own and spread rapidly, changing the character of natural areas by altering native communities and ecological processes. Some plants are

very aggressive and displace native plant species- transforming diverse plant communities into single species stands with limited value as wildlife habitat or forage. Well known examples include spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, kudzu and salt cedar.

*Did you know that human activities are responsible for exotic weed invasions?*

Weeds and recreation are related. The presence of weeds can dramatically change a favorite natural area, making it a less attractive destination for enjoying the outdoors. Ironically, our recreation activities contribute to the spread of these unwanted exotic plants.

## Leave No Weeds Principles

Be aware and prepare

Camp and travel in weed free areas

Pull and pack out

Report it



## Activities that spread weeds



- Any form of motorized travel
- Traveling through disturbed areas
- Traveling with livestock or pets
- Entering Wilderness or other pristine areas
- Renting equipment

### Be Aware and Prepare!

**Be aware** of and learn to identify problem weeds in your region. **Prepare** by knowing what weeds to expect in the areas you visit. There is a lot of information available on-line.

Go out there **prepared** to pull some weeds! Remember to bring along a garbage bag and gloves when you head out for the day.

If using livestock, feed them **Certified Weed Seed Free feed** before and during backcountry trips. Animals can spread viable seeds after ingestion.

### Camp and Travel in Weed-Free Areas

Don't be the person who brings leafy spurge or musk thistle to a pristine area! Using equipment in or walking through weed patches will help weed spread seeds. They'll stick to your vehicle, tent, shoes, and whatever else you have, and hitch a ride to a new spot.

Stay on **designated roads and trails**- going off the beaten path helps to distribute seeds and creates disturbances where weeds can spread rapidly. Use established campsites when possible- new campsites create disturbances where weeds can thrive.

### Pull it Out, Pack it Out

If you find a weed that hasn't gone to seed, **PULL IT OUT!** Pull only species that you can identify, and pull only taprooted species (pulling rhizomatous plants, like leafy spurge, can help increase their rate of spread). Try to get the whole root.

**Wear gloves** for protection against thorns and toxic chemicals produced by

some plants. Try to minimize soil disturbance when pulling weeds.

And remember- pulling weeds that have gone to seed can help spread them around. Better to leave those plants alone, or put the seed heads in a plastic bag and **PACK THEM OUT**.

### Report it

If you find a new weed not yet established in your area or a small, isolated patch of common weeds, notify the authorities. This could be the landowner, Forest Service, National Park Service, etc, depending on where you found the plants. Make sure you can give an exact location! If we catch infestation while they are new and small, we have a much better chance of controlling them.

### About this Program

Leave No Weeds was developed at Lolo National Forest in Missoula, Montana, as an educational program for sixth graders. Funding is provided by the USDA Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Missoula County Weed District and Plum Creek Timber Company. This web page was created in cooperation with the University of Montana.

Everyone should learn more about how weeds affect our natural resources and natural heritage!