



Spring 2018

NEWSLETTER OF THE

ILLINOIS VALLEY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Fight Against an Invader: Yellowtuft Alyssum

There is an ongoing battle against a plant named Alyssum, common name Yellowtuft, in the Illinois Valley. This invasive exotic species threatens to overtake the Illinois Valley's unique native plant communities, including plants found nowhere else in the world.

"Yellowtuft" refers to two species of non-native perennial mustards that thrive in serpentine soils (*Alyssum corsican* and *A. murale*). The fight against Yellowtuft Alyssum in the Illinois Valley is critical; it is one of the only known locations of the species in North America. The most effective way to stop the spread of invasive species is to eradicate them before they become widespread.

Yellowtuft Alyssum was introduced to the U.S. from Eastern Europe, and was originally planted as an environmentally conscious method for cleaning up contaminated mining sites. It has the unique ability to extract metals from the soil and concentrate them in stems, shoots, and leaves, which may cause harm to livestock and wildlife. Alyssum is a dangerous outsider that can outcompete the rare native species that make our valley unique and diverse; it could take over in the same way that Himalayan blackberry and scotch broom have, leaving us with less variation on the landscape.

Yellowtuft Alyssum plants are fast growing and long lived, re-sprouting from roots. The seeds can be spread by wind, water (down the river corridor), human activity, and animals. You can help prevent spreading seed by washing mud and plant material off equipment, tools, vehicles, and shoes before leaving infested areas. Identify Yellowtuft Alyssum by its hundreds of small, bright yellow flowers on branched tufts. The leaves of the two species look different but, because most leaves are shed prior to the initiation of flowering, the two species look almost identical when in flower.

Stop by your local Conservation District office, next to IV News and immediately south of Dairy Queen, to pick up a full color brochure to aid in identification.



Yellowtuft Alyssum. Photo by K. Amsberry

The Pasture Calendar for April, May, and June

This Livestock Grazing System uses:

- Pasture rotation
- Sacrifice area
- Minimum stubble height
- Soil testing

In order to:

- Maximize quality and quantity of forage production
- Improve water quality (by keeping soils covered)
- Save money on supplemental or alternative feed

When grasses are grazed too low, carbohydrate reserves are lost, and new growth potential is reduced or delayed for the next grazing cycle. (The bottom 3" belongs to the grass)

WEATHER:

This quarter we will see days getting longer until the summer solstice on June 21st. Soils are getting progressively warmer and are moving from very wet toward very dry as we move toward summer.

GRASS IS:

transitioning from rapid wet season growth to dormancy in the hot-dry summer months. Irrigating pasture can prevent dormancy. Expect slowing to steady growth through May and early June. Seed heads emerge in early spring (April, and May for late species). Top growth slows in May, and root shedding occurs in late May to early June.

MANAGEMENT:

-Don't graze pasture below minimum stubble heights (4"-6" for bunch grasses, 3" for sod forming grasses) through early May. From late May through January, recommended minimum stubble height goes down to 3" for bunch grasses and 2" for sod. Confine livestock as needed to avoid grazing below minimum stubble heights; provide alternative hay or other forage.

- Let above ground forage height reach twice that of the recommended residual stubble height before allowing grazing.

- Cut hay before mature seed-setting phase (graze or harvest). This keeps grass in the vegetative growing stage, producing leaves available for grazing.

-Apply seed to pasture and sacrifice area in April.

- Control weeds (clip or spray) in April through early May. It's much easier when they are small; you don't want them to overtop and outcompete pasture grasses.

AVOID:

-Compaction and plant damage on saturated soils (from both equipment and animals).

-Grazing below minimum stubble height.

The full Pasture Calendar publication is available at your local Conservation District office or on the web at <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw699.pdf>.



Coho Corner: What are They up to This Time of Year?



Alevin. CDFW photo by Derek Acomb 2013.



Juvenile Coho Salmon. CDFW photo by Derek Acomb 2013.

Fish are a driving factor behind the water quality improvement work we do. The wild Coho in our backyards are listed as threatened on the federal endangered species list. What are they doing this time of year?

Coho eggs have been incubating in the gravel since the late fall/winter spawning. They will hatch when the streams begin to warm up and the temperature becomes just right, usually in April. The newly hatched fish are called alevins. They live in the small spaces between pieces of gravel for 2-10 weeks, and cannot swim. This is the most vulnerable life stage, when disturbances in the gravel stream bed can harm them. They can become buried in silt, squashed by shifting gravels, or swept away and eaten. Coho spend one year in fresh water. At the same time the new eggs are hatching, the yearlings begin migrating downstream.

After their yolks are absorbed, the alevin emerge from the gravel as fry. Around here, this usually happens in May or June, but it depends on the water temperature and when the eggs were fertilized. Fry hang

around sheltered areas on stream margins and in side channels, finding protection in roots and overhangs. They eat, try not to be eaten, and move into deeper water as they grow. The most productive areas for fry are small streams with low gradient, complex channels and abundant pools formed by large woody debris. Agricultural land development and other human activities have historically resulted in a reduction of these favored habitats by simplifying streams.

You can help by being aware of how your activities affect the stream; don't disturb the stream bed or let sediment-laden runoff enter the stream during this critical time for Coho or any other salmonids, including Chinook and Steelhead. The Conservation District may be able to help you fund and install a vegetated buffer on your banks to filter runoff before it enters the stream. The Conservation District, or our partners with the Watershed Council, may also be able to help create more in-stream habitat on your property.

Conservation Land Leasing: CREP

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is available to producers with land adjacent to streams in the Illinois Valley. The purpose of the CREP program is to restore riparian habitat and improve surface water quality on agricultural lands. In exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and introducing conservation practices, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural land owners are paid an annual rental rate. Generally, 75% cost share on approved conservation practices are available for projects such as riparian fencing, restoration planting with site preparation and release, and off-channel watering. (A 50% cost share comes from the Federal Government and a 25% cost share from the State). A one-time signup incentive payment is issued at contract approval, which is \$100 for each acre enrolled in the program. Participation is voluntary, and the contract period is typically 10–15 years, along with other federal and state incentives as applicable per each CREP agreement. The CREP program is an opportunity for you to improve fish habitat on your property without shouldering all the cost of improvements, and getting an annual lease payment to boot. Contact the Illinois Valley Conservation District to speak to Tracey Brandt for more information.

Why Riparian Vegetation Matters

*This article was re-printed with permission from the West Multnomah SWCD.
It was written by Kammy Kern-Korot, Senior Conservationist.*



This is the time of year when you might see streambanks eroding during or after heavy rainfall. Rainwater can collect rapidly and run off in sheets across the surface of the ground, ultimately flowing over streambanks and filling streams to capacity. Water flowing downhill from upper watershed areas can add to the problem, as can logging and home development activities.

Riparian vegetation - trees, shrubs and other plants that grow near streambanks – filters runoff and sediment and slows the floodwater so that the sediment can settle and plant roots can hold the soil in place. Excess nutrients draining from nearby pastures, fertilized fields and yards can be absorbed by riparian plants, which may reduce the potential for harmful algal blooms and excessive aquatic plant growth in the stream or canal. Healthy riparian trees and other vegetation act like a

sponge to absorb excess water during flood periods, some of which enters the groundwater and is released later, helping to increase low late summer and fall stream flow.

Beyond the erosion benefits, healthy riparian areas provide vital habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. They give cover and shade to keep both stream and ambient temperatures cool for fish and other wildlife, provide food to the aquatic and terrestrial insects at the bottom of the food chain, and provide important food, shelter, nest sites and migration corridors for birds and other animals. A wide variety of species, such as hummingbirds, bald eagles, beaver, otter, mink, deer and elk, use riparian areas. Multi-layer riparian zones also provide aesthetic benefits, privacy and noise buffering, wildlife viewing, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.

While natural processes definitely play a role, one study found that most of the estimated 10 million tons of sediment eroded from streambanks in Oregon and Washington was caused by people. In addition to maintaining healthy riparian vegetation, landowners can minimize pervious surface (paved), plant more trees and shrubs, direct stormwater runoff to vegetated areas (instead of to driveways and culverts), and keep livestock away from streambanks to minimize erosion.

Upcoming Siskiyou Field Institute Free Learning Programs

Ask Eli About Recycling

April 13 | 6:30 p.m.

Presented by Eli Savides, Recology

Our Watersheds & OR Water Right Basics

May 18 | 6:30 p.m.

Presented by Tracey Brandt, IV Conservation District

Predictors, Prevailers, and Climate Change

April 27 | 6:30 p.m.

Presented by John Roth, Oregon Caves

Geology, Flora and Fire Ecology

June 1 | 6:30 p.m.

Presented by Larry Broeker and Luke Ruediger



Upcoming Board Meetings

April 26 | 6 p.m.
May 24 | 6 p.m.
June 28 | 6 p.m.

All meetings take place at Illinois Valley High School in the cafeteria or career center.

Board of Directors

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Living on Your Land Conference

Do you own or manage acreage in Southern Oregon? Do you have a small farm or a small woodlot? Are you thinking about acquiring property? Are you a land manager or simply a natural resource enthusiast? If you answer yes to any or all of these questions, this conference is for you!

Presented by the OSU Land Steward Program and Rogue River Watershed Council, Living on Your Land features more than two dozen 90-minute classes on a variety of topics related to natural resources and land management. You can participate in up to four classes during the conference. Classroom space is limited and some popular sessions fill up early, so don't delay in registering.

This conference takes place on Saturday, April 14th at Rogue Community College in Grants Pass. The registration deadline is April 6th, and costs \$60. For details on class schedule, speakers, and registration, visit www.livingonyourland.com, or call RCC Continuing Education at 541-956-7303.

Upcoming Events in the Community

IV Garden Club Meetings

All meetings take place at the Immanuel Methodist Church with light lunch served at 12:30pm and speakers presenting from 1:15pm - 2:00pm with Q&A.
March 16th: Caring for your Pollinators
April 20th: Growing violets in your garden
May 18th: Gardens and Sustainability

World Fish Migration Day Festival

Saturday, April 7th
Grants Pass at North Middle School

Farmer and Rancher Listening Session

Wednesday, April 11th from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
SOREC in Central Point at 569 Hanley Rd.

Cave Junction Farmers Market

Opening day is April 20th
Jubilee Park from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Public Lands Clean Up & Weed Pull

Thursday, May 3rd
10 a.m. - 3 p.m. (Meet at Coffee Heaven to car pool)
Bring a sack lunch. This event will include an educational presentation.

Wild & Scenic Rivers 50 Year Anniversary Party

Saturday, June 16th
Valley of the Rogue State Park in Grants Pass

The Illinois Valley Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer.