



Tales from a
Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

The warning bell is ringing!

The warning bell is ringing loud and clear, Good People!

Those hundreds of dead and dying yellow pine along Highway 20 from Sisters to beyond the Camp Sherman cut-off are telling us to be careful with chemicals.

Is it really necessary to use chemicals to abate vegetation?

According to Peter Murphy, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Transportation, ODOT, has over 18,000 miles of highway shoulder vegetation to manage state-wide. Trying to keep vegetation from growing on highway shoulders to the point of being not only a nuisance but becoming a serious safety factor would be costly beyond reason without the use of herbicides.

Not too many years ago knapweed along Highway 97 south of Bend was so thick on the highway shoulders it was moving into the adjacent forest lands at Lava Butte. ODOT took it on with gusto, using manpower and chemicals to not only halt the advance of knapweed into forest lands but to completely eradicate it — and it wasn't easy or cheap.

The use of chemicals to treat the roadside in the Sisters area didn't end so well, and there's yellowing and dying ponderosas to prove it.

To those of us who live in fear of what the chemical-users around us are going to do next — such as killing tens of thousands of native bumblebees as the result of

another chemical blunder — those dead trees are crying out to us, “Be aware and be careful!”

But, ya' know, there may be even more to the dead trees than meets the eye.

Before ODOT does anything to or for a highway that rolls alongside U.S. Forest Service-administered lands, both outfits sit down and talk it over. Unfortunately, the chemical application that resulted in the tree-killing apparently dropped though the cracks; that is, there was a “changing of the guard” going on just about the time the project got into the discussion phase.

The Prineville Forest Service office usually handles these projects, but the person who was responsible had retired, and that person's replacement hadn't arrived yet. When that person did move in and dove into all that had to be done, all there was left to work out on the shoulder vegetation spray project was the label from a chemical with the name of “Perspective,” and it was given a free pass, even with these instructions on the label...

Perspective's important restrictions:

• *Do not apply this product in areas where the roots of desirable trees and/or shrubs may extend unless injury or loss can be tolerated. Root zone areas of desirable trees or vegetation are affected by local conditions and can extend well beyond the tree canopy.*

• *Do not apply this product if site-specific characteristics and conditions exist that could contribute to movement*

and unintended root zone exposure to desirable trees or vegetation unless injury or loss can be tolerated.

• *Do not apply Perspective® Herbicide to roadsides or other non-crop areas during periods of intense rainfall, or where prevailing soils are either saturated with water or of a type through which rainfall will not readily penetrate, as this may result in off-site movement.*

Reading those instructions would seem to awaken the interest of vegetation managers who are judging the impact on roadside vegetation, and especially ponderosa pine trees; according to the instructions, the chemicals would impact roadside trees.

On top of that, roadsides see big run-offs from rain and snow, the root system of pines does spread well beyond the canopy, etc., etc. What took place was, in retrospect, “Murphy's Law” in action: “If something can go wrong, it will” — and it did.

Then there's the roadside chemicals already there that will mix with any chemical(s) used to “control” or “kill” unwanted roadside vegetation. What impact do the materials coming from motor vehicles have on the product(s) used to kill roadside vegetation? What do the oils, fumes and other debris issued from tires, exhaust and other motor vehicle materials have on that chemical environment? What about all the other debris left behind trees and shrubs and along the roadside? The instructions for the use of Perspective clearly states that it cannot be mixed



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

The results of using the wrong chemicals in the wrong place. Trees are dying along Highway 20 west of Sisters.

with other chemicals.

Apparently, Perspective was not tested for its effect on the health and welfare of ponderosa pine, which contributed to the unfortunate consequences of the death and destruction to a scenic corridor that's unparalleled in our beautiful state of Oregon.

But that isn't all of this calamity: it's a warning to all of us to use the utmost care when using any chemical that's applied to our land and water for any reason.

Today's chemical manufacturers seem to have

sold most of America that DuPont's old slogan, “America is a better America through chemistry,” is gospel for today's living.

It's up to all of us, not ODOT, Forest Service or DEQ, to keep these accidents from taking place. Please, think again before you purchase and use the chemical you think you need to solve a problem in your backyard; we all share the same backyards, the land we live on, the water we drink, and the air we breath. And above all: **READ THE LABEL!**

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7 Variations on Gift-Giving For Your Spouse

There are plenty of occasions that may justify a gift for your spouse: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, Valentine's Day or just because. Over the course of your lives together, those gifts can add up to be a significant amount of money, as well as space in your home. If you're feeling like there are too many gifts being exchanged, discuss the following ways to simplify the giving with your spouse.

Be clear and selective. Start by having a conversation with your spouse about your gift preferences. If you really want (or need) something, whether a gift or going out to dinner, and hate to be disappointed, say so. Or if you prefer not to receive gifts, make that known as well. You also can think about reducing the number of gifts you exchange or the occasions when gifts are expected. For example, you could agree to give one gift at each occasion or exchange cards instead. If you like the tradition of opening a gift under the tree or receiving something special on Valentine's Day, agree to stick with tradition — try not to go overboard.

Give experiences. Experiences, such as an activity, trip or a day spent together, could be even more meaningful than a physical gift. Consider re-creating your first date, checking an item off your spouse's bucket list, or making a day of doing his or her favorite activities.

Give gifts that keep giving. Consider making a donation in your spouse's honor to a favorite nonprofit organization or signing up for a service project. Many organizations will allow you to tailor the project to what your spouse likes to do best if they know about the occasion in advance.

Complete your to-do list. Is there a task or two that your spouse wishes you took care of last week, or last year? Purchase the items needed to finish the basement remodel, plant the vegetable garden or organize the attic. Then follow through on the commitment, aiming to finish in time for the special occasion.

Give the gift of time. Does your spouse have a “guilty pleasure” they never seem to make time for? Allow him or her to indulge in uninterrupted time to catch up on their favorite TV show, read a magazine or book, take a nap, etc. while you take care of their responsibilities.

Buy for value. You can be practical and lavish at the same time by buying gifts for one another that have the potential to retain their value or appreciate over time. Fine jewelry, art, furniture, a collector's item and even stock are thoughtful gifts that are assets in their own right.

Be flexible. Prescribed gift-giving can stunt the fun in a relationship. Leave room for spontaneity as long as you have good intentions and sufficient discretionary income.

Mark Greaney is a Financial Advisor with PacWest Wealth Partners, an advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc. in Bend, Oregon. He specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 17 years. Contact Mark at www.PacWestWealthPartners.com, or call him at 541-389-0889. Mark is located at 35 NW Hawthorne Avenue, Bend, OR.



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