

Beetles control plant's future growth

**BEETLES continued
from front page**

"How much of the field is infested with Scotch broom?" McCoun asked Clift, reading from a state-supplied list of questions that will help the Oregon Department of Agriculture track the success of the effort.

Clift looked around. "Forty percent?" he suggested.

"I agree," she said, and wrote it down.

The deep yellow shrubs thrive on the hills along both sides of Hebo Road (State Highway 22) and along the Salmon River Parkway (State Highway 18) in the local area, and though they bring color to their surroundings, they do a lot more damage than good.

"Scotch broom is considered a noxious weed species," said Brandy Humphreys, the Tribe's Environmental Resources Specialist in the Natural Resources Department. "When they grow in these big stands, they completely reduce biodiversity and they don't provide good habitat for wildlife, either. They can cause erosion problems, and besides all that, they don't provide benefits. There are other pretty plants out there that provide ecological benefits."

The hope and expectation is that these beetles, the natural enemy of the plant in its native Scotland, will feed on the pollen and lay eggs on the green seed pods, according to a

Department of Agriculture white paper. "The larvae hatch and tunnel into the pod where they feed inside the seeds."

"We'll know after the first winter," Humphreys said, if the beetles will survive to become a self-sustaining population.

In the Eola Hills, where these particular beetles were part of a healthy population, the self-sustaining colony has become the go-to area for beetles that can be used to seed colonies in other places.

At their best, the beetles won't wipe out the invasive Scotch broom plant.

"It's a control and not eradication," Humphreys said. "We still have to mow, burn and/or use herbicide on the plant. However, this can go a long way in reducing the plant's spread."

By eating Scotch broom seeds that are productive on their own for more than 50 years, the beetles control the plant's future growth, not the presently existing plants.

The effort, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, began in 1998, and the beetles represent the second biological agent that the state has used to fight Scotch broom. The other, a Scotch broom seed weevil, the department said, "is already present at most infestations." Even together, the biological agents are only part of the larger control effort.

Tribal members have expressed

concern that once the Scotch broom seeds are destroyed, the bugs could go after native plants, like the camas.

But look at the case of the tansy ragwort.

The Oregon bio-control program started here in 1974 to work on tansy ragwort. At the time, tansy was a noxious weed costing the state almost \$5 million a year in lost livestock. Today, though it is still seen here and there, tansy is no longer responsible for any adverse financial effect to state agricultural programs, said Tim Butler, manager of the state's Noxious Weed Control Program.

But, John E. Asher, Oregon Youth Conservation Corps director, noted that as the population of tansy decreased, so did the bio-control agent, and to the point where tansy has started coming back again.

"That's common with bio-control," said Butler. "In a lot of areas, you have a kind of cycling going on, often a lag time before the bio-control stuff grows again and suppresses the target again. There are always some residual insects out there."

"There might be a two- to three-year lag time before the controls catch back up, and then we'll get this dramatic crash of the tansy population. It can be pretty dramatic from one year to the next."

Butler said the science has gotten so good and the requirements for introducing bio-agents so exacting

that he knows of no instance where a bio-agent introduced since the 1970s has endangered any but the target plant. Not all have controlled the target plant, he said, but none have crossed over to affect other plants or animals.

Biological agents are selected from among the noxious weed's natural enemies in their places of origin. The testing period lasts years before any biological agents are released into the fields.

"We can control 90 percent of the seed or more (with the biological agents)," Butler said. "Then, long term, the Scotch broom population will drop off. It's not going to happen overnight. It's a slow process, but long term it can really pay dividends."

Scotch broom is one of more than 100 invasive plant species tracked by state and federal agencies for control or eradication purposes. The state uses "about 72 bio-control agents on about 37 different weed species," Butler said.

"Invasive species are the one thing that people reach consensus on across boundaries, whether federal, Tribal, private, it doesn't matter," Asher said.

"And you can't just go up to a line and stop and think you've done the job. Everybody has to work together to get rid of it everywhere, or it'll just come back." ■

Cultural Corner

Intermediate Twining Basketry Class

Grand Ronde
July 11
Education Room 207
9 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Eugene
July 18
9 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Portland
Aug. 1
9 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Bring a sack lunch and good scissors
Limit to 15 people per office.
RSVP to Misty Thorsgard 503-879-2320

Wing Dress Class

students need to contact Misty Thorsgard for supply list

Portland
July 6, 13, 20, 27
6:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.

Grand Ronde
July 19, 26
11 A.M. - 5 P.M.

Eugene
Aug. 2, 9
11 A.M. - 5 P.M.



Eugene Wetlands Class

June 25, July 23, Aug. 13, Sept. 24

for information contact Greg Archuleta
503-663-0927
or gregarchuleta@verizon.net

Parfleche Class

Grand Ronde
July 16, 17
Education Room 207
5:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.

Portland
Aug. 1
11 A.M. - 5 P.M.

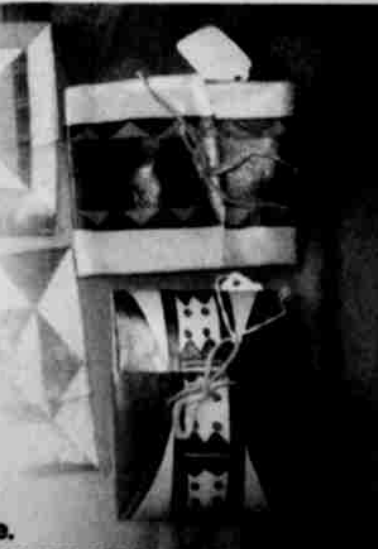
Eugene
Aug. 8
11 A.M. - 5 P.M.

All materials provided
Limit to 10 people per office.
RSVP to Misty Thorsgard 503-879-2320

Gathering Class

Eugene
July 23
11 A.M.
Portland
July 18
11 A.M.

for information contact Greg Archuleta
503-663-0927
or gregarchuleta@verizon.net



Phone: 503-879-2320

Fax: 503-879-2126

E-mail: misty.thorsgard@grandronde.org