

Community



Photo by:
Richard Old
www.xidservices.com



Photos by Rich Old

Scotch thistle is a common invasive weed that can infest almost any piece of ground. The biennial species starts by producing a rosette the first year (above photo) and thereafter it sends 1 to 6 upright extensions with secondary extensions tipped with pink flowers (left).

Invasive weed of the week

By Jeffrey Pettingill

The enemy

Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) is a biennial weed that invades any piece of property that can be found. It is the tall thistle with an egg-size flower head. It forms a rosette the first year and then sends up 1 to 6 vegetative upright extensions (up to 10 feet tall) that produce terminal pink flowers. Secondary growth extensions form from mid-length to produce flowers as well. These seed heads will be oval on the bottom and have pink flowers. This entire plant is silver-green with deep lobed serrated leaves. It also has

spiny winged stems from the ground all the way up to the flower.

The strategy

This plant is very invasive. It spreads by birds, people, ATVs or other vehicles, which allow it to travel onto adjacent lands. Its rosette can grow 5 feet in diameter, which allows it to shade desirable plants and rob the soil of needed nutrients. Being a thistle the plant hosts many sharp points that make it so no animal wants to pass close to it.

The defense

As with most annual and biennial plants it can be

controlled with a shovel. Ensure that you get at least 4 inches of the root or it will grow back. Also, loosen the soil by cutting into the soil and working in a circle; when you return to the starting point, pry the shovel handle back and pull the plant out of the ground as to limit the amount of disturbed soil. There have been insects released in which the larvae eat the seeds in the top flowers. Roundup and 2,4-D are not effective on this plant except in the early spring. Using advanced products such as Escort XP or Telar XP (1 ounce per acre) are very effective as well as Milestone/Opensight, or Tordon 22K.

First in a series

Jeffrey Pettingill, weed control supervisor for Baker County, will be writing an occasional article about a common noxious weed in the area, along with tips for dealing with the weed. Pettingill encourages people to call him if they have weed questions or see a species they're not familiar with. His office number is 541-523-0618 and his cell is 541-519-0204.

BMCC graduates to parade

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College will celebrate the Class of 2020 this evening with a special “Parade of Graduates” in lieu of its traditional commencement ceremony, which wasn’t possible due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. The Parade of Graduates will begin at 7 p.m. on the BMCC Pendleton campus. Graduates will line up in the “triangle” parking area at the bottom of the BMCC hill, and will drive up the hill and around campus in a parade. Graduates may have their immediate family members inside their vehicles during the parade. Graduates’ families and friends, as well as faculty, staff and other community members are invited to park in designated areas around campus to cheer on the graduates as they drive by. Guests should plan to arrive on campus by 6:45 p.m. While noisemakers are welcome, fireworks, firecrackers, poppers and confetti are prohibited. BMCC will broadcast a live stream of the event from its YouTube channel. The College will also record the event, as well as capture the parade via aerial drone footage courtesy of BMCC agriculture instructor and certified Unmanned Aerial Systems pilot Drew Leggett.

Sid Johnson & Co. gets N. Baker School contract

By Chris Collins
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Sid Johnson & Co., a well-known Baker City construction company, has been awarded the bid to serve as general contractor on a project that will transform the North Baker School Building into an early learning center. Sid Johnson & Co. submitted the low bid of \$1,616,884. The only other firm vying for the contract was McCormack Construction Co. of Pendleton, which bid \$1,788,700. The bids included two alternate projects that were included in the accepted proposal, said Cassie Hibbert, project manager with Wenaha Group, which has an office in Pendleton. The project architect is LKV Architects of Boise. Hibbert, who has worked with the District for the past several years on long-range facility planning, coordinated the bidding process. Bids were opened on May 28. Hibbert said the first alternate was a \$9,715 project to install cabinetry and plumbing in two classrooms in the southwest wing of

the ground floor of the North Baker School, 2725 Seventh St. Sinks and cabinets will be needed as classrooms are transformed for kindergartners, she said. New matching sinks and cabinets also will be added to the other kindergarten classrooms that have existing plumbing, she said. The second alternate, totaling \$80,169, is for installing new aluminum windows on the first floor. “The District really, really wanted to do the windows,” she said. The District listed the two projects as alternates in case the bids came in high, Hibbert said. But that wasn’t the case. “The bids came in favorably and in line with our budget,” she said. Sid Johnson & Co.’s “first-tier subcontractor list,” which Hibbert said contractors are required to provide in their bids, includes these firms:

- Scrivner Paint of Baker City, \$93,230
- Outpost Electric of Baker City, \$319,496
- Nelson Excavating of the Walla Walla Valley in Washington, \$267,620

- Dillabaugh’s Flooring of Idaho’s Treasure Valley, \$152,314

Other Baker County subcontractors on the project are Eagle Cap Plumbing, Alpine Alarm and A+ Affordable Construction (fencing), Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty stated in a press release. The North Baker building was constructed in 1909. The District added on to the north end of the building in the 1950s and a wing was added to the south end of the building in the 1970s. The total cost of the renovation project is \$2.3 million, Witty said. In addition to a \$96,158 District contribution, funding sources include: \$1.8 million from the Oregon Student Investment Act; \$200,000 in grant funding; and \$80,000, from Preschool Promise, the Oregon Department of Education’s Early Learning Division. In reviewing the proposed

budget with the Baker School Board at its April 24 meeting, Hibbert said a 9% contingency was included. The north end of the building will be remodeled to include four classrooms for programs including Early Intervention, Head Start and preschool. The south wing restoration project will include five kindergarten classrooms that will be occupied in the fall of 2021 to relieve overcrowding at Brooklyn Primary School. The kindergartners will remain in the self-contained modular buildings at Brooklyn this fall. In addition to new paint, flooring, plumbing and electrical work and window replacement, the interior renovation will include abatement of asbestos tile, pipe insulation and fire escape cladding in the newer areas of the building as well as the tuffstone section, Hibbert said.

The play area on the building’s north side will be fenced and the parent and bus drop-off system will be reconfigured. The existing basketball court will be converted to a parking lot. The renovation will involve about 25,000 square feet of the North Baker School Building’s total 40,000 square feet, Witty said. At the Board’s April meeting, Hibbert said the work being done to convert the old building into the Baker Early Learning Center will make it more appealing to the youngsters who will begin their educations there. “The goal is to make it look like a positive, exciting and pleasant place that kids will want to be in,” she said. Hibbert said Wednesday that the construction work could start as early as next week. Preschool classes are scheduled to begin in the building on Oct. 5.

SAM-O

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Bogart, a retired school administrator, served as interim Y director 10 years ago. This time around “it’s a whole new world,” Bogart said Wednesday. The Fitness Center at 3715 Pochontas Road and the Y gym at Second and Church streets have been open since Gov. Kate Brown approved Baker County’s phase 1 reopening plan May 15. “People seem glad to be back,” Bogart said. With phase 2 starting June 6, Sam-O Swim Center at 580 Baker St. will open on Monday, June 15. “Pool operation will be guided by state guidelines and safety precautions,” Bogart stated in a press release. Because of the social distancing requirements, there will be no open swim as the pool reopens. Paula Moe, the Y’s aquatics director, has worked with health officials and other aquatic center directors to devise a plan to keep swimmers safe, however, Bogart said. Rather than open swims, “Family Swim” times will be included in the schedule from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. There is no charge for Y members; nonmembers will pay \$20 per family. To participate in the Family Swim time, parents or guardians will be required to be in the water with their children to help the Y maintain a safe environment, Bogart said. Lap swim time will be Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and on Saturdays from 8:30 a.m.

to 9:15 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. A variety of water aerobics classes also will be scheduled throughout the week. No swim lessons will be offered at this time and there will be no deck seating, Bogart said. There will be no change in the chlorination in the water, which is added to prevent infection, he said. The most important concern will be the distance and contact between swimmers. Other changes swimmers will notice are hand sanitizing requirements, additional cleaning of showers and restrooms and occupancy limits. At the Y Fitness Center, updates in recent days include the availability of the showers and dressing rooms, with some limitations. Drinking fountains are available for filling water bottles brought from home. Bottled water, towels, lap counters and earbuds also are sold at the Y’s Welcome Center, Bogart said. The Y will continue the protocols from phase 1, which require those entering any of the Y’s buildings to use hand sanitizer and to answer questions about symptoms or exposure to the coronavirus. Entry, exit and traffic direction are controlled and some areas and equipment are closed, Bogart said. Staff members are coordinating their efforts to ensure that equipment is sanitized after each use. The staff will be wearing masks, but masks are not required for those using the facilities, Bogart said. More information and current schedules can be found on the Y’s website at www.bakerymca.org or by calling 541-523-9622.



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