

Weeds

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clusters of yarrow, a native plant with a similar white flower that grows in similar areas to the hoary alyssum, like fields, rangelands and pastures.

Pettingill applied for a state grant through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to help identify where the weed had spread. He was awarded \$9,500 in July of 2021, paid for by Oregon lottery dollars, which supported on-foot surveys that confirmed hoary alyssum's spread in Baker County.

He also sent a letter to 82 landowners informing them about the new weed.

Although 2020 was the first sighting, Pettingill said he didn't know when the weed actually arrived in the county and how long it went unnoticed — its modest appearance might have allowed it to spend years growing and spreading under the radar in Baker County.

According to the state's noxious weed profile, hoary alyssum was already widespread in the Northeastern United States by the 1890s after it was originally transported to North America from Europe as a seed contaminant. It's listed as a noxious weed in several other Western states.

But hoary alyssum isn't widespread in Oregon. Other than the recent Baker County infestation, two isolated patches of the plant exist: one in Wallowa County near the town of Wallowa and a dense infestation near Sisters in Deschutes County.

Pettingill said he doesn't know exactly how the weed spread into Baker County, and that he initially underestimated its local prevalence.

"We didn't know how vast it was," Pettingill said.

He discovered that the weed wasn't only in pastures near Haines, but also in higher elevations in the foothills of the Elkhorn Mountains. Pettengill said he wasn't aware last summer that the weed had also spread to the pastures near South Rock Creek Road.

He said he believes the weed started in the hills and then moved into the pastures. Pettingill applied for another state grant of the same amount to continue fighting the weed in 2021 and 2022. Over a third of the grant went to buying herbicides, enough to treat 300 acres of hoary alyssum.

He said he's already sprayed that amount this year.

He said the amount of the grant is "unfortunate, based on how many

acres we found. We need to try to write another one this winter to supplement somehow."

Since the state has classified hoary alyssum as "noxious," property owners who find it on their land are required to take some kind of action — either themselves or through Pettingill's program — to control it.

Landowners can also participate in a cost share program, separate from the hoary alyssum grants, where the county will reimburse owners for half the cost of herbicide and then train the owners with weed-spraying practice.

Pettingill said he needs as much help as he can get from landowners because he's had trouble hiring a weed control staff to help him with spraying projects. The Baker County Weed Control team is made up of Pettingill and his black Lab, Jack, who is probably more likely to spread weeds than control them.

"We're definitely outnumbered by weeds," Pettingill said.

A threat to hay

Pettingill peers out the window of his truck at a hay pasture west of Haines. It's recently been cut.

"Now I've gotta track down that hay," he said.

Last time he saw the field, bunches of white hoary alyssum flowers were sticking out among the grass. He suspects the weeds were cut, baled and shipped out with the rest of the hay. The weeds could be on their way to Pendleton or Hermiston, or anywhere, for that matter.

On a local level, it's most common for the weeds to spread on tractors and equipment, Pettingill said. But it can travel greater distances when buried in a hay bale.

Not only that, but the weed lowers the nutritional value and productivity — and ultimately the profitability — of hay crops it grows in.

Hoary alyssum contains toxic chemicals. Pettingill said animals will generally eat around it, but once it's in hay, they aren't so picky. Cows that eat hoary alyssum-filled hay are usually OK, but when consumed by horses it can cause fever and depression.

In 2020, hay production value for all of Oregon totaled \$569,160,000, according to the Oregon Agricultural Statistics and Directory.

According to the Oregon State Weed Board, hoary alyssum is classified as a target species, and as an "A list" species because it's "of known economic importance and occurs in the state in small enough numbers to make eradication or



Clayton Franke/Baker City Herald

Pettingill's spraying system — which is attached to the back of an ATV — allows him to spray weeds on uneven terrain.

containment possible."

Along with the landowners, that containment is largely up to Pettingill.

Chemical warfare

Although Pettingill has a degree in biology, sometimes his job requires him to become a chemist.

Some noxious weeds can be fought with biocontrol, by introducing bugs or plants to combat the weed. That's not the case with hoary alyssum — herbicides are the best bet.

And for his new enemy, Pettingill has a particularly potent concoction. Just 1 ounce of Telar, the herbicide used for hoary alyssum, can treat an acre of weeds.

"It's like spraying a shot glass over a football field," Pettingill said.

Pettingill mixes the Telar — a brown, granular substance that's as "safe as table salt for humans" — with water in an old Powerade bottle, leaving the herbicide suspended in a mixture that looks a lot like chocolate milk. In this state, he said, water droplets and herbicide droplets exist separately.

"When it's suspended, you might have five droplets that are just water and one droplet with the herbicide in it," Pettingill said.

This mixture would work to a certain extent, but just one addition drastically changes its effectiveness.

It's at this point in the process that Pettingill's truck bed looks something like a high school chemistry classroom. He adds a third element to the mixture — professional-grade ammonium — that turns the bottle translucent brown, dissolving the herbicide, essentially spreading it out through the mixture.

He also adds a surfactant, which helps the herbicide soak into the plant faster.

Now, "everything that touches the leaf has herbicide in it," he said.

The herbicide limits the plants ability

to build proteins, essentially starving the weed's growth.

However, the effectiveness of Pettingill's herbicidal mixture also depends on timing — to catch hoary alyssum in the right stage of its life cycle — and a weakness of the herbicide itself: hot weather.

Like other annuals, hoary alyssum drops its seeds into the soil in late fall, where they overwinter and then sprout in the spring. It's a prolific seeder, sometimes producing up to 2,600 seeds per plant.

Pettingill said the ideal time to spray the weeds is when they first bust through the soil in the spring or early summer. Too much sunlight and the herbicide will degrade quickly and lose potency, while hot soils culture natural bacteria that also degrade the herbicide.

Once the yellow flowers fully bloom at the top of the plant above the cluster of small, oval seeds, it's probably too late to spray, Pettingill said.

But it was another herbicidal weakness that prevented Pettingill from attacking hoary alyssum at the optimum time this year.

An unusually damp spring left excess water on the weeds, which can dilute the herbicide, preventing Pettingill from spraying. That left time for the sprouts to grow into full-size weeds and take over pastures and rangelands, leaving little room for native plants on properties like the one Pettingill visited near the Elkhorns on Tuesday.

He said a herbicide application now could still make the seeds less viable, but he prefers to wait until the fall for a more effective spray, as he'll do with this property. That way, the offspring of these plants will encounter the herbicide in the spring.

"All the seeds that are gonna try to germinate will germinate, but they'll die," Pettingill said.

Hospital

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hardly unique. The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, a nonprofit trade association, reported that the bleak hospital financial picture from 2021 only worsened in the first quarter of 2022.

A surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations from the omicron

wave and rising labor and other costs combined to produce a dismal fiscal quarter that saw 58 percent of Oregon's hospitals post a negative margin.

Additionally, according to the first quarter report, Oregon hospitals' median operating margin saw a 2.5% decline. However, the report noted, the drop was below those seen in the earliest stages of the pandemic.

In a nutshell, the report

noted that hospital revenue in Oregon is not covering the cost of patient care.

Nonetheless, Price emphasized that Blue Mountain Hospital is not looking to reduce staffing or services. The only cuts to labor costs, he said, will come from eliminating — where it is possible — contracted clinical labor. In addition, he said this year's budget includes more funding to recruit talent into the area and

retain those who are here.

He said the hospital district has set aside \$22 million for labor costs that includes money for recruitment and retention bonuses.

"Those dollars will help the local economy rather than continue to invest in travelers who may spend a little bit while they're here, but mainly goes back to wherever their hometown is," he said.

In the interim, Price said,

the hospital is watching for federal grant opportunities to help ease the current financial strain.

"Nothing is definitive," he said, "and we are continuing to work on things."

In addition to Blue Mountain Hospital, the district operates the Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic, Blue Mountain Care Center and a hospice and home health service. It employs around 250 people.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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65				66					67			
68				69								

64. Popular type of shoe
65. The territory occupied by a nation
66. Tattle
67. Chop up
68. Actress Zellweger
69. Romanian city
- CLUES DOWN**
1. Female of a horse
2. Bowfin
3. Chinese dynasty
4. Small venomous snake
5. Global news agency
6. Common fractions
7. American state
8. Tired
9. Boxing's GOAT
10. Made less severe
11. A group of countries in special alliance
12. God of fire (Hindu)
13. Northeast Indian ethnic group
21. Anchor ropes
23. They —
25. Apprehend
26. Autonomic nervous system
27. A theatrical performer
28. 2-door car
29. Partner to floored
32. Pair of small hand drums
33. Former Houston footballer
34. Discharge
36. Former women's branch of the military
37. Partner to cheese
38. Witch
40. Live in a dull way
41. Satisfies
43. Snake-like fish
44. Consume
46. Type of student
47. Erase
49. Instruct
50. Girl's given name
51. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
52. Every one of two or more things
53. Indian city
54. Greek letters
57. Weapon
58. Geological times
59. Cycle in physics
61. Soviet Socialist Republic
62. Witness

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to kindergarten.

UTYHO

SUDOKU

2	7					1	8
		4					
1	9		6				
			3		7		
	4	8	2	6	3		9
2				8	7		
3							5
5	8	6					

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku! This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Guess Who?

I am an athlete born in California on August 3, 1977. My love for football began at age 4 when I saw the NFC Championship game. I am the all-time leader in Super Bowl appearances and I've set numerous NFL records.

CLUES ACROSS

1. Female parent
5. NY city
10. Israeli diplomat
14. Surrounded by
15. Car part
16. Simple aquatic plant
17. Tough skin of fruit
18. Finnish lake
19. Composition
20. Very willing
22. One and only
23. Cluster cups
24. Famed Hollywood director
27. Score perfectly

30. Important of the spectrum
31. Undivided
32. Part of the foot
35. Spun by spiders
37. Married woman
38. Reagan's Secretary of State
39. Instruments
40. The A-Team drove one
41. Short-tailed marten
42. Oil organization
43. Predecessor to the EU
44. "Hotel California" rockers

45. Color at the end of the spectrum
46. Actress Ryan
47. Digital audio-tape
48. Expression of creative skill
49. Scientific instrument
52. Dog-_: marked for later
55. Israeli city — Aviv
56. Fencing sword
60. Turkish title
61. Wise individuals
63. Cold wind

CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to kindergarten. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 1 = O)

A. 25 23 4 16 16 17 1 1 10
Clue: Space for learning

B. 15 18 19 7
Clue: Age for first schooling

C. 21 7 4 25 6 7 17
Clue: One who educates

D. 16 25 6 1 1 23
Clue: Education building

KINDERGARTEN WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS
ART
CHILDREN
CIRCLE TIME
CLASSMATES
CUBBY
CURRICULUM
DESKS
FIRST
FLASHCARDS
FRIENDS
INTRODUCTION
KINDERGARTEN
MANIPULATE
NERVOUS
PLAY
READING
RECESS
SCHOOLING
SIGHT
STUDENT
SUPPLIES
TABLES
TEACHER
VOCABULARY

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