

GROUPS INVITED TO “ADOPT-A-WEED-PATCH”

The Jefferson County Noxious Weed Control Board is establishing an “Adopt-A-Weed-Patch” program, through which volunteer groups will commit to controlling a patch of weeds near to their home, school, church or place of work. The initial focus will be on poison hemlock control in Port Townsend, but the plan is to expand to many groups working on a variety of weeds all over the county.

Pulling weeds is a way you can enhance wildlife habitat, reduce danger of poisoning to people and livestock, have fun, and get some healthy outdoor exercise; all at the same time!



Poison hemlock, which is widespread in Port Townsend, is toxic to animals and to people. A large enough dose can be lethal (it was the plant that killed Socrates in ancient Greece), and poisoning sometimes occurs when it is mistaken for other, edible members of the parsley family such as anise, chervil or dill. It grows 8 to 12 feet tall at maturity, with fern-like leaves and delicate white flowers.

Tansy ragwort is also toxic and it is widespread throughout Jefferson County. Its bright yellow flowers can appear as early as June and continue into October or even November. It is common on roadsides and in pastures and it is toxic to people, pets and livestock. It has dark green, ruffled-looking leaves and can grow 8 to 10 feet.

Poison hemlock and tansy ragwort are both biennials—plants that take two years to complete their life cycle. They produce a rosette of leaves the first year and flowers and seeds the second year. Elimination of biennial plants requires getting rid of current plants and stopping their spread. Pulling plants before they produce seed achieves both of these objectives. Mowing and cutting are not as effective because the plant responds by growing back, tougher and stronger than before. Pulling or digging are more effective in the long term. Poison hemlock plants appear as early as January and pulling them is easy in the spring when the plants are small and the ground is soft and moist.

The Weed Board will help groups to organize, will identify areas that groups can work on, loan gloves and tools, help with plant identification and participate in weed pulls as available. We can also coordinate with landowners and make sure the required permits or volunteer waivers are in place. Please contact us at 360-379-5610 ext 205, or noxiousweeds@co.jefferson.wa.us if you would like to form a group and pull weeds.