

# WEED NEWSLETTER FOR MAY 2012

## WILD CHERVIL UPDATE

As most of you know, wild chervil has become a problem on many county roads and is spreading fast. It forms monocultures on roadsides where native plant communities used to thrive. It is also moving into woodlands and agricultural lands where it crowds out forage and other crops. Because the hollow stems dry slowly, it can cause hay to mold; it also harbors a pathogen that can attack carrots and parsnips. Handpulling and/or mowing are the control measures that have been used but they have failed to stop the spread. Herbicide application has been suggested, but there is some public opposition to herbicide use on county roads. A meeting was held on April 12<sup>th</sup>, to allow people to express their concerns. **Another meeting will be held on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 6 pm, at the Tri-Area Community Center in Chimacum and alternative plans will be presented. The Weed Board's regularly scheduled meeting is on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 5 pm, at WSU in Port Hadlock. ALL Weed Board meetings are open to the public.**



Wild chervil flowers and leaves

In the meantime, because wild chervil plants on Larson Lake Road are already blooming, county road crews made a special effort to get out and mow them, and volunteers pulled plants from the ditch, where the mower cannot reach. More volunteers are needed. Please call 360-379-5610, ext. 205 to find out more. Thanks to all concerned!!



Wild chervil encroaching on bleeding heart



County mower at work

## SUCCESSFUL WEED PULL AT FORT WORDEN

Despite many other events taking place that day, eight volunteers turned out on April 21<sup>st</sup> to pull weeds at Fort Worden. The day was beautiful—sunny and warm. We focused on poison hemlock along the back of the campsites. Because almost all the campsites were occupied, we asked campers if they minded us working in their “backyard”. All of them were of course very happy to learn that we were removing a toxic plant and several of them put gloves on and helped!! Many thanks to everyone.



## ADOPT-A-WEED-PATCH

Despite yeoman efforts by weed board staff and volunteers over the years, poison hemlock is still rampant in Port Townsend and other parts of the county. And it is TOXIC. All parts of the plant are poisonous and almost every year someone in our state dies from eating poison hemlock, thinking it was some other parsley-family plant (anise, dill, fennel, chervil etc.)

It grows 6-8 feet tall, has bright green, fern-like leaves and small white flowers, arranged umbrella-fashion, which appear in late June. Many similar plants are found in our area, but two features distinguish poison hemlock—the stem has distinctive purple blotches, and there are no hairs anywhere on the plant.

Control of poison hemlock is easier early in the year rather than later. Even though most plants are now 2-3 feet tall, they have not yet flowered or made seed, and the ground is still soft enough for them to be pulled relatively easily.

Many volunteers have already been out pulling poison hemlock (thanks to all of you!) but more help is needed. The Weed Board has started an Adopt-A-Weed-Patch program, whereby a small group can take on a weed patch near their home or place of work and pull weeds there as often as needed. The Weed Board can help by loaning tools and connecting people with each other. North Beach, the Food Coop, the High School and the Golf Course are all places where help is urgently needed. Contact the Weed Board (360-379-5610 ext 205, or [edixon@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:edixon@co.jefferson.wa.us)) if you would like to get involved. We need all the help we can get and you will get outdoor exercise, help your community and maybe even make new friends !!

## WEED OF THE MONTH—MAY

### SULFUR CINQUEFOIL (*Potentilla recta*)

- Sulfur cinquefoil grows one to three feet in height.
- The leaves and stems are hairy. Each leaf has five to seven leaflets.



- The flowers have five light sulfur-yellow petals surrounding a dark yellow center.
- Each flower is half an inch to one inch in diameter. They bloom from late May throughout the summer.



#### Look-a-likes:

Sulfur cinquefoil may be confused with buttercups (*Ranunculus spp*) or with several of our native cinquefoils (*Potentilla spp*). However, the flowers of buttercups and all of the native cinquefoils are bright yellow, not the distinctive sulfur-yellow of sulfur cinquefoil.

#### Distribution:

Sulfur cinquefoil has been seen in only a few sites in Jefferson County, Eaglemount and Brinnon being the major ones.

#### Why Be Concerned?

- Sulfur cinquefoil is extremely invasive, particularly in meadows, where it can outcompete grasses and reduce forage productivity.
- It is unpalatable to livestock.

#### Control:

Because sulfur cinquefoil is very hard to control once established, prevention and early detection and removal are strongly advised. **MOWING** is not an effective control measure, because the extensive root system stores food reserves and sends up new shoots after mowing.

- **Practice** good pasture management; avoid overgrazing, irrigate and fertilize as needed, and reseed bare ground. A healthy pasture will resist weed invasion.
- **Use** weed free hay and seed; avoid introducing weed-contaminated soil.
- **Remove** seedlings when young; newly established plants can usually be pulled without leaving root fragments in the ground.
- **Monitor** site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

**Sulfur cinquefoil is a Class B designate weed. Control is required in Jefferson County.**