

MONITOR the site every 6-12 months to reassess the area and to pull any re-growth that may have sprouted. This will effectively prevent re-infestation. species and prevent new and recurring invasions.

Other Control Methods

Chemical methods should only be utilized if you feel that your infestation of pokeweed is too large or difficult to remove by hand and with basic tools. Please visit 4countycwma.org for more control recommendations.

If pokeweed rootstock is impossible to excavate due to pavement or difficult situations, chemical control may be an option. Please contact your local SWCD.



Photo: Leonora Enking

A Word of Caution

For any herbicide applications we urge you to work with a licensed herbicide applicator and to please refer to the PNW Weed Management Handbook or contact your county noxious weed coordinator. Always read and follow the label on any chemical product you are using!

SUBMIT YOUR REPORT TODAY!

American pokeweed is a top priority species within the 4-County CWMA boundary. Please report all sighting to the Oregon Invasive Hotline by visiting www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org or www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/sighting_form.shtml if in Washington.



The mission of the 4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area, comprising Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington Counties, is to create and support collaborative weed management in the greater Portland area. For more details on our collaborative efforts in management, mapping, and outreach, please visit our website:

www.4countycwma.org



AMERICAN POKEWEED

(*Phytolacca americana*)

Oregon Watch
List Species



Photo: James Gaither

Overview

Many parts of this plant are highly toxic and may cause death if eaten. Commonly found in disturbed areas and more increasingly in urban landscapes, this plant can be very difficult to eradicate once established.

Pokeweed was brought to this region from the southeastern United States, where it is native, as an ornamental and as a potherb. Berries are spread by birds. Plants are also passed among neighbors and sold at plant sales and swaps. It is considered aggressive and invasive, but is new to the NW; with vigilance, we can stop or slow this weed before it becomes established in this region.

How to Identify

Pokeweed is a 2-8 ft. tall perennial forb. Stem is smooth, stout, hollow and purplish. Leaves are large and egg-shaped with pointed tips and smooth edges, and are alternate on the stem. Flowers are white or green and form elongated clusters that hang from branches in early summer.

Fruit are hanging clusters of very dark, purple berries with a crimson juice that stains. The large white, fleshy taproot is carrot-shaped when the plant is young, growing to the size of a bowling ball when the plant matures. Plants die back to root stocks each winter, only to re-emerge the following spring.

Lookalikes

This plant has sometimes been mistaken for Japanese knotweed, another invasive species in northwestern Oregon. Knotweed has hollow spotted green or reddish stems and triangular to heart shaped leaves rather than the bright purple stems and and ovate leaves of pokeweed. Japanese knotweed flowers tend to grow upwards rather than in a downward droop and will not produce the dark berries characteristic of pokeweed.

Prevention

Cut off flower heads and dispose of them in the trash to prevent spread by birds. Avoid purchasing this plant and look out for it at plant swaps. Pull/dig up this plant as soon as it is identified as it will be more difficult to remove manually if it is allowed to reach maturity.



Young pokeweed plant. Photo: Ken Redmond



Photo: Nate Woodard

When to Remove

Pokeweed is a perennial forb with stems, leaves, and flowers that die back to the ground each year, but the roots live through the winter. As such, removal of pokeweed is best undertaken in spring, when new stems and leaves develop, making location and identification easier.

Basic Manual Control Methods

TOOLS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- Gloves
- Shovel or spade
- Trash bags

EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND REMOVAL when shoots are young is the quickest and easiest means of control.

Small plants can be **HAND PULLED**. Larger, more established plants should be dug out in early spring when soil is moist and new growth has begun. Plants can also be removed by digging out the root or using a weed wrench to pull larger trees. Be thorough in removing the entire root, as new sprouts may grow from any root fragments left behind.

If there are no seeds weeds may be **COMPOSTED**, but flowers, seeds, and berries should be disposed of in the trash.

PLANT native or non-invasive alternative plants in the area that is being controlled after the bulk of the invasive plants are removed. This will help to repopulate the area with desired species and prevent new and recurring invasions.

Alternatives: Native blue or red elderberry (*Sambucus cerulea* or *Sambucus racemosa*) are fast growing, deciduous shrubs with creamy white flower heads and berries that are edible to wildlife.



Photo: Louise Gadd



Photo: Luc de Leeuw