

WEEDS: PRETTY PLANTS GONE BAD

Invasive weeds of the Las Vegas Wash

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PRETTY

The invasive weeds of the Las Vegas Wash may look pretty, but they are among the greatest threats now facing this fragile ecosystem.

BAD

When introduced into an ecosystem, invasive weeds can take over animal habitat, degrade the native soil, increase soil erosion, reduce the diversity and quantity of native plants and have a negative impact on water quality. Their seeds are often carried to the Wash by wildlife, water, vehicles or visitors' clothes.

WEEDS

Years of non-native plant introductions and human settlement have led to this continuing biological invasion. Some weeds are already widespread, while others are actively colonizing new areas. You can protect the Las Vegas Wash by controlling weeds on your property.

BAD WEED PROFILES

TALL WHITETOP



(AKA: Perennial Pepperweed, *Lepidium latifolium*)

A native of Europe and Asia, the tall whitetop was introduced to the United States in the 1800's. This weed can grow to eight feet while forming dense thickets that crowd out native plants. It increases soil erosion in the Las Vegas Wash while offering a poor habitat for wildlife.

GIANT REED



(AKA: Arundo, *Arundo donax*)

The giant reed is a native of India and is now present throughout the southern part of the United States. Like its name implies, the giant reed grows to heights of 12-16 feet, while forming a wall of dense thickets. The giant reed presents a fire hazard and impacts flood flows while offering very poor habitat value.

TAMARISK



(AKA: Salt Cedar, *Tamarix spp*)

One of the most prevalent and aggressive of weeds, tamarisk is a native of Europe and Asia, and was introduced into the United States in the early 1800s. It now represents 80 percent of the vegetation in the Las Vegas Wash. Tamarisk is very difficult to remove and increases the salinity of the soils in the wash while drawing down the water table. Like the giant reed, tamarisk presents a fire hazard and affects flood flows.

GREEN FOUNTAIN GRASS



(AKA: Fountain Grass, *Pennisetum setaceum*)

Until recently, Green Fountain was sold as an ornamental grass. The weed is no longer sold as it invades natural areas and displaces native plant-life. Originally from northern Africa and the Middle East, it is known as a fuel for wildfires and has recently begun invading the water sources that flow into the wash.