



CARLSBAD SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

3219 S. CANAL

CARLSBAD NM, 88220

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WINTER 2017

WWW.CARLSBADSOILANDWATER.ORG

## Blowing Grass Seedheads

By: Woods Houghton, Eddy County Extension Service

The past couple of weeks there have been lots of range grass seed head blowing and piling on fences and front doors and more. A few years ago when we had this issue, it was needle and thread grass, *Hesperostipa comata* or when I was in school *Stipa comata*, this time it is bottlebrush squirreltail grass. For those of you who like scientific names it is *Elymus elymoides* but when I was in college it was *Sitanion hystrix*. What is bottlebrush squirreltail? Bottlebrush squirreltail, or simply squirrel tail, is a short-lived grass closely related to great basin wild rye, though not nearly as noticeable. Mature seed heads twist, its stem giving a bottlebrush or squirrel tail appearance. Hence the name bottlebrush. Its ability to germinate in the late fall and very early spring at a wide range of temperatures add to its capability to compete with cheat-grass (*Bromus tectorum*L.) and needle and thread grass. Studies also indicate that squirreltail is capable of establishing in medusahead wild rye (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*(L.) Nevski) infested sites. This makes squirreltail one of the more competitive native grasses available for reseeding disturbed rangelands. It is also a self-pollenating species which allows it to produce seed despite sparse stands following seeding, and seeds are dispersed when the awn (long hair-like structure you see) seed head is bounced along the ground by the wind.



Squirreltail is considered to be one of the most fire resistant native bunchgrasses. Older plants contain relatively low amounts of dead material when compared with other native bunchgrasses. This allows for hot, but quick burns which do not penetrate and damage the crown. However, during dry years plants can be damaged by severe burns. As an early-seral species, new plants often increase for two to three years following burns.

When in large, dense stands, squirreltail is very effective at controlling wind and water erosion, due to its persistent ground cover. Squirreltail is considered to be fair to desirable forage for cattle, horses and sheep in spring before seed head development and late summer to fall after seed shatter. The long, sharp awns of the florets and glumes can be injurious to grazing animals during mid to late spring into summer. Leaves green up in very early spring and are palatable through the fall, especially following rain. The tendency for some leaves to remain green through the winter makes squirreltail an important, though not especially nutritious, winter forage species. The crude protein can range from 18% in the spring to 4% in the winter. This plant is a much more desirable range plant than the needle and thread grass it has replaced.



*Continued on pg 3*

### Water Conservation - In the Home

Carlsbad SWCD has Low-Flow showerheads for the home. These showerheads conserve water as well as improve water pressure in areas where pressure is an issue. If you are concerned with water conservation, and/or have problems with irregular water pressure, come by the District office at 3219 S. Canal and pick up one of these showerheads, they are free; however, we do limit one per household.



### SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC Staff Information Assistance On -

Certified compost facility operator  
Xeric planning and irrigation use  
Licensed public pesticide applicators  
Vegetation identification  
Small scale terrain management  
Subdivision reviews

### EQUIPMENT

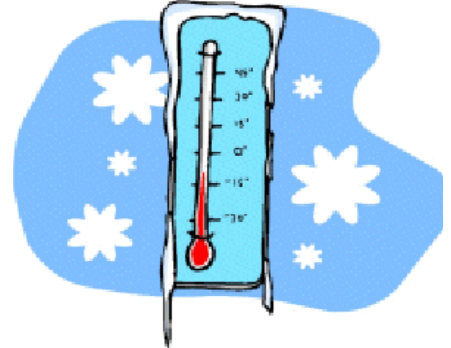
Poinjar - posthole digger  
Solo backpack sprayer-pellets and granules  
Drip torches - controlled burns  
Well depth measure - measure water well depths  
Camel pitter seeder - disc revegetation  
Gopher Tail Bounty - First Monday of month is turn in day  
Water Testing - Irrigation wells, surface water, and Carlsbad Irrigation District irrigation water  
Cost-Share Program for Brush Control - provides funds for a Cost-Share Vegetation Management program. The funds are limited to a 50/50 cost share match, up to \$5,000 per individual per year.

## Conservation Tips

Choose shrubs and groundcovers instead of turf for hard-to-water areas such as steep slopes and isolated strips.

Use a layer of organic material on the surface of your planting beds to minimize weed growth that competes for water.

Look for products bearing the EPA WaterSense Label for items that have been certified to save 20% or more without sacrificing performance.



In the cold months, set the thermostat to 68 degrees when home, and then back to 55 - 68 degrees when unoccupied.

In the winter, open window coverings on the sunny side of your home to take advantage of free heat from the sun. Close the coverings on cloudy days or right after the sun sets

Close foundation vents in the winter months.



Caulk windows as well as caulking and weather-stripping doors. Keep the outside air out and the inside air in.

Plant trees and shrubs on the south and west side of your residence. The vegetation acts as insulation and provides shading, reducing thermal gain in a building.

Pay attention to your water bill and become familiar with your water meter—use them to track your water use and detect leaks.

Continued from pg 1



Awns may also get stuck in animal hair and be transported by them. Bottlebrush squirreltail inhabits a wide variety of soil types and is tolerant of alkali soils. It is drought adapted, growing best with 8 to 20 inches average

annual precipitation which is Eddy County. In general, squirreltail is classified as fair forage for grazers. Later in the season after flowering, it may be consumed only after the seed head have broken and fallen because their sharp points can injure soft tissue. It provides fair erosion control and produces large numbers of highly viable seeds. Squirreltail's most important role is as an early successional species, growing rapidly following. It shows good potential in its competitive ability against cheat grass, and the needle and thread grass we had a few years ago. So while it may seem like a nuisance the fact it is here is a sign that our range land is healing after the severe fires we had a number of years back, and that ranchers with state and federal land managers are taking care of this vital resource.

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## Ask S. K. Worm

What does the weather do to soil?



Whether you believe it or not, weather helps make soil. When the weather gets hot, rocks can get bigger. When the weather turns cold, rocks can get smaller. If this happens often enough, the rock will crack and break up into small pieces that break into even smaller pieces.

*"All life in the wilderness is so pleasant that the temptation is to consider each particular variety, while one is enjoying it, as better than any other. A canoe trip through the great forests, a trip with a pack-train among the mountains, a trip on snow-shoes through the silent, mysterious fairy-land of the woods in winter--each has its peculiar charm."*



*-Theodore Roosevelt*

# Noxious Weed Alert

## Malta Star-Thistle Invasion

Malta star-thistle (*Centaurea melitensis* L.) was first found in Eddy County around 2003 along the truck bypass in Carlsbad. I carry a hoe in the truck for such occurrence and have gouged out a number of new invasive weed when I see them. I was too late for this one however; I did gouge out a patch only to find 20 or more patches down the highway. Since that time this weed has been the target of the Eddy County Weed Management Group who have done their very best to stop this weed.



The fact it has taken 13 years for it to become a major concern is a testament to their work. But like the Russian thistle (tumble weed) it can now be found just about everywhere in the county and is moving from disturbed sites such as road sides into fields and landscapes.

It is a winter annual with a spiny yellow flowered head that reaches about 3 feet high, but under good growing conditions can reach 4 feet. The spines are less than 1.5 inches, which distinguishes it from its cousin yellow star-thistle. It reproduces by seed and can produce 1-60 seeds per flowering head. The leaves are withered usually by flowering time. This is a tricky weed though. It germinates in the fall, like the mustard, as soon as it has two true leaves it bolts and sends up one flower that will have 1-5 seeds, all less than 3 inches tall. So it is difficult to mow this flower off and it has guaranteed species survival for another year or more. There have been six biological control insects released for yellow star thistle. These insects feed on the seed thus reducing seed production. It is a wait and see if they can also help with Malta, so far



as I know we don't have any in the state yet. Chemical control if applied at the right time of year works well. The systemic herbicides clopyralid or picloram work well when applied between December and April in rangeland or roadside applications.

These chemicals will kill trees and other desirable broad leaf plants. Once the flower is set, chemical application doesn't do the job. In alfalfa fields the use of the mustard herbicides when there are mustard weed present may help. Clorpyralid and picloram will kill alfalfa and other perennial broad leaf plants, like pecan trees, so you cannot use them. Sheep and goat like to graze this weed until it gets the spiny flower. It has no toxic effect but once the spines form they can lodge in the mouth and tongue causing problems; however most animals will not try it. Cattle don't seem to have any

desire to feed upon it at any stage. This weed is almost impossible to control by mechanical methods. For homeowners in landscape situations all you can do is use a hoe to cut off the tops, catching the seed head and disposing them in a dumpster, but as described earlier there are those survival seeds that are produced without much notice. Because of flooding in the past there is a lot of seed in the fields and if you do



not spray for mustard it will get worse. The seed will not germinate until late fall. You can control the mustard and this weed too hopefully with good applications.

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**Protectors of Home, Health & Environment**  
**NM Pest Management Assn**

NMPMA Spring Seminar & Tradeshow  
 Route 66 Casino, Albuquerque  
 March 30 - 31, 2017

An interactive learning environment, panel discussions, CEU's, class polling, and a Vendor Trade-show, in two information packed days.



**NMPMA is hosting an ACE Prep Course & Exam at the Spring Seminar & Trade Show**

This year at the NMPMA Spring Seminar, you will have the opportunity to attend an ACE Prep course and take the ACE Exam on March 30th. Not only can you become ACE certified, but you will get CEU credits at the same time. So don't forget to register for the NMPMA Spring Seminar as well. If you are interested in becoming an ACE, please send in the "ACE Information and application form" to, ESA Certification Corporation by February 28th, 2017. The proctor for this class will be Dr. Bob Davis with BASF.

**Spring Seminar Speakers:**

- Jerry Schappert**, PestCemetery.com
- Dr. Jeffery Morrell**, Oregon State University
- Dr. Michael Bentley**, Staff Entomologist, NPMA
- Dr. Bob Davis**, BASF
- Larry Plecha**, Biotech of New Mexico
- Dr. Rick Fletcher**, Nufarm

- Rene Kessel & Cassandra Morrison**, Coldwell Banker
- Paul Bello**, PJB Consulting
- Dr. Robert Pucket**
- Rick Hobson**, Garden Talk, 770 KKOB
- Robert Garcia**, Winfiled

**Seminar Trade Show Schedule**

March 30, 2017

- 7:00AM - 8:00AM Registration
- 8:00AM - 5:00PM Sessions (lunch provided)
- 5:00PM - 6:30PM Raffle followed by NMPMA members meeting

March 31, 2017

- 7:00AM - 8:00AM Registration
- 8:00AM - 2:00PM Sessions

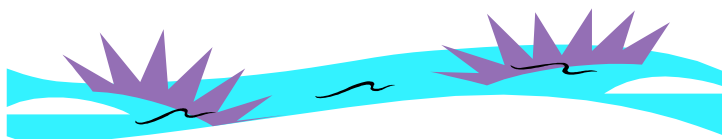
**CONSERVATION WORD SEARCH**

D A G W T F U S F E R B O R  
 S E A C E I L M O L C R E D  
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GARDEN, AWN, NANDINA, SQUIRREL, WITHER, BOLT,  
 INSULATE, BERRY, SEEDLING, SMOTHER, COURSE,  
 GOAT, BOUNCE, DISTINCT



**To reserve a hotel room call  
 505-352-7866  
 Mention the NMPMA Seminar  
 for discounted room rates**



# Wintertime Xeric Garden Tips

After the winter holiday season, most gardeners start itching to get back out in the yard and start their spring gardens. Although we have had a mild winter so far, chances are we will still have a snow, a deep cold snap, and days of high winds where the weather will make it impossible to work in your garden. As a result, January and February are ideal months for planning, ordering seed, and starting plants indoors to be ready the instant they can jump into the growing season. When the weather does cooperate, this time of year is the best to take care of projects for a great looking spring and summer landscape and a jump start on your vegetable garden.

Mulch helps to insulate root crops and ornamentals. Straw or hay mulch is easiest to use.

Weather forecasts - use an outside recording thermometer to compare the weather forecast for your area with the actual low temperature. Cloudy nights are warmer, clear nights are colder. Dry, windy nights exacerbate frosts.



When planning your landscape, don't forget what it will look like in the colder months. You have to look at your yard all year, so take into consideration what it will look like when the leaves are gone and summer color fades.



Want new beds? If so, lay out newspaper 5 or 6 sheets deep, then add several inches of compost over the top. This kills existing vegetation by smothering it. Four months later, you can dig it up to work the compost into the soil. No sod removal is necessary. (This is best done in December or January.)

Focus on bark. Sure, deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter-time, leaving their branches and trunks in focus. But that can be a good thing. Ornamental trees that have really visually distinctive bark, end up adding winter interest. In addition to distinctive bark, branches with interesting architectural or structural form make what could be a boring and drab view interesting and fun when leaves are gone.

Include berries. Many trees and shrubs have berries they hold onto during fall and winter, and those can provide food for birds overwintering in your area. Crabapples hold their little fruit and they make a great addition to the winter landscape. Hollies can really beautiful and add a pop of color with both their leaves and fruit.

*Continued from pg 6*

Remember evergreens. Evergreens are great in the winter landscape for many reasons. First, there's color: Evergreens are not just green; they're available in yellow, such as Gold Thread false cypress, and blues, including dwarf blue spruce, and all colors in between. Evergreens just make good design sense, they're important for a winter landscape, and make good focal points all year-round. When planting new beds, don't forget to include evergreens.

Rely on your hardscape. Winter is a good time to critically assess your landscape, figuring out where it's missing focal points. The solution to enhancing your winter landscaping might not be a plant at all. Winter is the best time to consider hardscape; a trellis, bench, an arbor or even a garden sculpture and add visual interest all year around.



Adorn your summertime containers. Window boxes, hanging baskets, winter-hardy containers: All are indispensable for winter landscaping. Miniature dwarf Alberta spruce and broadleaf evergreens, such as dwarf nandina, holly and rhododendron, are perfect for wintertime, but they all have to be watered during dry periods. You don't have to spend money on plants fill containers with evergreen boughs of different textures and colors and interesting twigs, or anything with color in it. A nice pop of color while the weather is grey will brighten your landscape.

Stick with four-season perennials. Some perennials have evergreen foliage -- ornamental grasses, hellebores, even dianthus with its beautiful low-creeping foliage -- making them great for winter landscaping.

Winter is also a great time to stock up on the non-plant elements you'll need for the next year's garden. It's a good time to bargain-shop for anything for the garden. Take a tape measure, research plants, and figure out seeds you'll need, and write down what

worked and what didn't in the current year.

While you might not be able to do quite as much outside during these months, it's a wonderful time of year to plan and reflect on what you wish to accomplish when the weather warms. Spring is just around the corner, so enjoy the relaxing indoors and planning for the upcoming longer days and sunshine!

## **New Mexico State Forestry Conservation Seedling Program**

Ordering for seedlings from the NM Forestry Division Conservation seedling program for Spring 2017 begins December 5, 2016 and orders will be accepted through April 14, 2017. Distribution of seedlings begins March 7, 2017 and ends on April 21, 2017. You may order on-line at [www.nmforestry.com](http://www.nmforestry.com) or by mailing in an order form with payment (order forms can be downloaded and printed from the website). We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover for on-line orders, and check or money order for mailed-in orders.

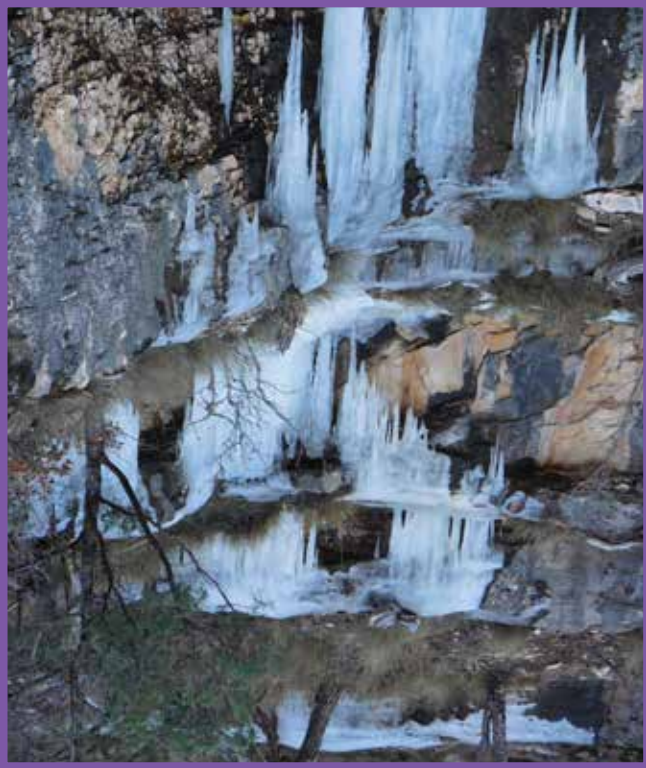
Over 60,000 seedlings are available for purchase through the Spring 2017 Conservation Seedling Program. There are over 50 species available. NM Forestry Division sells containerized and bare root stock during spring distribution. Species vary depending on the type.



**Carlsbad Soil & Water Conservation District**  
**3219 S Canal**  
**Carlsbad NM 88220**

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**Remember: The SWCD meets the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00pm at 3219 S Canal, on the Pecos Hwy. Please join us!**



**Office numbers are:**  
**575-628-1532; phone**  
**575-885-5386; fax**  
**swcd@carlsbadsoilandwater.org; email**

**Our district board meetings are on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00pm. Meetings are held at 3219 S Canal in the district building.**

**The current Board of Supervisors are:**  
**Nathan Jurva, Chair**  
**Kristin Pope, Vice Chair**  
**Jim Carr, Secretary/Treasurer**  
**Lupe Carrasco, Member**  
**Charles Goodwin, Member**  
**Henry Vasquez, Member**  
**Fred Beard, Member**  
**District Employees:**  
**Judy Bock, District Manager**  
**Judith McCollum, Information & Education**