

SALT CEDAR

(*Tamarix* spp.)



SALT CEDAR

State Noxious Weed List: **Yes.**

Saltcedar is the common name for several introduced species of shrubs or small trees, including *Tamarix chinensis*, *T. parviflora* and *T. ramosissima*. Saltcedar is native to Eurasia and first was introduced into the U.S. to reclaim eroded areas and prevent further loss of stream banks, primarily in the southwest. Saltcedar has been sold in the horticultural industry, primarily for its wide adaptability and pink flowers. Saltcedar became established in North Dakota as escapes from ornamental plantings or from seed floating along rivers.

Identification and growth form:

Saltcedar is a shrubby bush or tree that can range in size from 5 to 20 feet tall. The bark is a reddish brown, especially on younger branches. The leaves are small and flat and resemble evergreen shrubs such as arborvitae. Flowers are pink to white and five-petaled, and appear from mid to late summer. The seeds are extremely tiny and similar in size and color to pepper. Each seed has a pappus, which allows it to float long distances in water or move in the wind. Seeds are short-lived and usually germinate within a few months after dispersal.

Once saltcedar seed germinates, it can grow rapidly to a small flowering shrub in one to two years. The plant is deciduous and very hardy, and horticultural varieties are advertised to grow “in sun or shade, and in wet or dry areas” from USDA hardiness zones 2 to 7. The plant quickly establishes a long, woody taproot to support a voracious thirst for water. The root system is capable of producing many new shoots if the top growth is removed by mechanical control methods or fire.

Why is this plant a concern?

Saltcedar can become a monoculture quickly along lakes and waterways. In the early morning and evening, moisture with high salt content is exuded from the foliage, causing the soil to become saline. Saltcedar can

choke waterways and even has dried up entire lakes. Native riparian species are quickly displaced by saltcedar, which in turn causes displacement of native birds and animals that generally do not feed on the leaves or eat the saltcedar seeds. Saltcedar, even in the seedling stage, will tolerate short-term flooding and can establish away from waterways when seeds are washed in during flooding. Once established, the plants can become so thick cattle will not graze the area.

How do I control this plant?

Prevention is the best method to keep saltcedar from invading North Dakota wetlands and wildlands. Scouting along waterways and removal of ornamental plantings have been effective in reducing the spread of saltcedar in North Dakota.

Chemical. Arsenal (imazapyr) is the most widely used herbicide to control saltcedar. Arsenal also can be applied with a glyphosate formulation labeled for use in water. Do not remove saltcedar top growth for three years following herbicide application or resprouting will occur. Garlon (triclopyr) has been effective when applied in the spring or late fall.

Cultural. Control methods such as burning or bulldozing have not been successful.

Biological. The leaf beetle *Diorhabda carinulata* defoliates the leaves of saltcedar. This insect feeds on the leaves of saltcedar and slowly reduces plant vigor. However, it has not been consistently successful in reducing saltcedar infestations. This insect has not been released in North Dakota because of the small size of the plants and low infestation level in the state.