

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Chase County Weed Supt. Randy Bartlett said there may be a new weed in town, or more specifically, the state.

He shares an article below by a fellow weed superintendent in the state, that discusses the potential that sericea lespedeza will soon become the newest weed on the noxious list due to its potential of being highly invasive.

Bartlett said there have been none of this weed identified in Chase County, but it has been growing in the southeastern part of the state.

He expects sericea lespedeza to be on the noxious list next year.

Here is the article published in The Weed Watch, a publication in the Nebraska panhandle.

Is there a new weed in town?

By Chris McCoy

Box Butte County Weed Control Department

Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*) is under consideration in Nebraska for listing as the next noxious weed. It has already been found in the southeastern part of Nebraska.

The Nebraska Invasive Species Project has conducted a risk assessment and determined that it has the potential for being highly invasive. As part of the Early Detection, Rapid Response approach, landowners and others are encouraged to report sightings of this plant to their local County Weed Superintendents for identification and recommendations for treatment.

Sericea lespedeza is a warm-season, perennial legume native to eastern Asia and is also known as Chinese bush clover or Chinese lespedeza.

It was first planted in the U.S. in 1896 by the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station. In 1924, seed from Japan was planted at the USDA Experiment Farm near Arlington, Va.

Its perceived value for erosion control, livestock forage and wildlife cover was generally accepted when it was introduced into Missouri during the 1930s. However, by 2001, the state of Kansas declared it a noxious weed and other states have programs to eradicate it.

Sericea lespedeza grows well in places where other plants cannot. It is a nitrogen-fixer, which allows it to persist in poor soils. It is tolerant to both droughts and floods.

While it prefers full sun, it can also survive in partial shade. This flexibility leads to its presence in a wide range of habitats and climates.

It grows especially well in new and old forest openings, dry upland savanas, roadsides and urban areas.

The small seed is yellow to red-orange in color. Once it germinates, the plant grows to a height of three to six feet.

The hairy stems branch at mid-plant, producing three-part leaves attached by short stalks. Leaves are wider at the tip than at the base and have a conspicuous point at the tip. The leaflets are green on top and white to light gray-green with silky hairs on the lower surface.

One to three white and purple pea-like, one-quarter inch flowers appear in the upper leaf axils from mid-July to October. Fruit and seeds are produced from October to March.

The single-seeded green to tan seed pods are flat to round. *Sericea lespedeza* becomes dormant once the seeds drop, and often remains upright.

The next year's growth begins at the base, creating dense stands that inhibit growth of other plants.

The plant has a deep taproot that allows it to out-compete native plants for water and nutrients, especially in times of drought. Increasing its competitiveness are the thousand seeds dropped from each stem. These seeds can remain viable in the soil for 20 years or longer.