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Brush Control: Buckbrush & Roughleaf Dogwood

While contrasting in their appearance, buckbrush and roughleaf dogwood are two of the more common brush species in our pasture/range stands. Our ability to control their spread, however, is equally important as both can result in reduced forage production. KSU Rangeland Management Specialist Dr. Walt Fick recently outlined some control options summarized here.

While short in stature at only two to three feet tall, buckbrush makes up for height by using above ground runners to spread around forming clumps. If you've ever tried to pull a plant that you can't spray (or just thought it would be 'easy' to try), you'll find this out rather quickly. That ability to spread is what gives it a huge competitive advantage even as a shorter statured plant in our forage systems.

Buckbrush can be (somewhat) controlled with two to three years of repeated mowing in early to mid-May. This is the time frame when root carbohydrates are the lowest, requiring the plant to regrow from a depleted root system. The key is being able to mow over multiple years to keep it weakened.

If chemical control is preferred, spray just as the leaves turn from light green to a darker color, again signifying that the plant is at its 'weakest'. Products like 2,4-D and picloram plus 2,4-D products can be very effective when appropriate timing is used.

Roughleaf dogwood can easily grow to heights above ten feet tall and can be identified by the flat topped clusters of white flowers that appear in late May or early June. That bloom stage identification is critical, as it's the time when herbicide applications seem to do the best job of resulting in good control. Our more commonly used active ingredients (triclopyr, dicamba, 2,4-D and picloram, for example...) might defoliate dogwood – but rarely kill it. Instead, consider high volume applications of products that use varying combinations of picloram, fluroxypyr, triclopyr, and 2,4-D for better results. These combinations can be found in products like PasturGard HL, Surmount, Grazon P+D, and Remedy Ultra. Repeated herbicide applications or herbicides used in combination with prescribed fire will likely be required, since dogwood is typically not controlled by a single application.

For a full list of products and application rates, pick up a copy of the 2019 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide available via your District/County Extension Office. Always read and follow label directions.

Unwanted Tree Seedlings

Two of our more common landscape species – maple and elm – produced a lot of seed this year, likely in response to prior stresses. Those seeds had to go somewhere, and most landed in gutters or the lawn. With ample rainfall, those that landed on the lawn are now sprouting and might cause you to take a step back when you look across your lawn.

Control options are varied. You can pull them, but most of the time they are too numerous to try that. You might be tempted to mix up a batch of spray and try to spot treat them. Most lawn herbicides will have some activity on them. The simplest thing to do, however, is probably just to mow them off. You likely won't kill them when they are very small, but before long, you'll mow enough off that they will eventually die. A combination of the above can sure work as well, but consider giving mowing a try first.