

Biocontrols are effective only on large populations of target weeds. Currently there are biocontrols available for diffuse knapweed, dalmatian toadflax, and Canada thistle.

Grazing was used for weed control in the past and is used today in new ways. Within portable fences, small herds of sheep or goats eat weed species. Grazers disturb soil and eat native plants; using them to control weeds requires careful planning, supervision, and timing at each site.

Burning with torches fed by propane tanks effectively eliminates small annual weed seedlings while leaving most native plants intact. Burning can be used only in seasons when there is no danger of wildfire, and when no burn bans are in effect.

Herbicides present difficult questions for backyard restorationists. They are effective weed killers but their side effects on human health and our ecosystem are difficult to understand; different products bring varying levels of risk. Use herbicides only after other methods have been explored. Weigh the pros and cons, talk to local experts, do research on the internet, and make an informed decision.

Ask a weed professional about which herbicide to choose, which applicator to hire, or courses offered in homeowner application. See the resources section, p. 38. Thoroughly



read labels and research the use and effects of any product applied to your land. Some herbicides are widely available; others require an applicator's license.

Two common types of herbicide are those that selectively kill only broadleaf plants, and broad-spectrum herbicides that kill broadleaf plants and grass. Selective broadleaf herbicides are less likely to damage nearby native grasses, but will kill wildflowers.

Use of the following herbicides requires no license: Redeem, Roundup, Escort, Plateau, Telar, Curtail, Milestone, and 2,4-D. Some of these must be mixed with a *surfactant*, which spreads herbicides over leaves, or a *sticker*, which adheres herbicides to waxy leaves. Ask your supplier for details. Dye added to the mixture helps to show where spray is going. If you must spray a great number of weeds, a backpack sprayer makes mixing and carrying herbicide easier.

Homeowners commonly use Roundup, made with glyphosate. It kills both grasses and broadleaf plants but does not prevent seeds from germinating. Milestone, a new herbicide made with aminopyralid, kills many broadleaf weeds but doesn't harm grasses.

Alternative sprays, like horticultural vinegar, which is concentrated at 20%, have shown promising results in controlling annual weeds. Household vinegar is typically concentrated at 5% and is less effective. Though horticultural vinegar is available online, it has not been evaluated and licensed for herbicide use by the Environmental Protection Agency. Use it with care, as contact with it can harm skin and eyes.

Planting for Restoration

Choose Plants that are right for your site. Take a tour of shrub-steppe in good condition in your neighborhood. There are beautiful examples on Patterson Mountain, on Lewis Butte in the Rendezvous, and in the hills above Pipestone Canyon. What plants are growing there, and how are they arranged? Use what you see to generate ideas for your project. Bring a field guide to identify plants and take notes; later, plot your ideas on your site map.

Bunchgrasses are the foundation of most Methow Valley naturalization projects. These hardy grasses compete with noxious weeds and stabilize soil to prevent erosion. Once they're established, they need little water. They add beautiful and dramatic accents to any landscape.

Wildflowers covering our hillsides are a pleasure to see, but they also support diverse native pollinators. Hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, and wasps evolved with wildflowers in complex pollination relationships that drive our ecosystem. When you plant native wildflowers you enrich your site visually, and you also encourage native fauna.

Shrubs like drought-tolerant bitterbrush and sagebrush are pervasive in our steppe lands; they provide food for seedeaters and places for animals to hide. But wherever moisture supports them,

Parsnip-flowered buckwheat,
Eriogonum heracleoides

you'll find taller deciduous species like serviceberry, choke cherry, and mock-orange. Their branching structure and berries create food and cover for wildlife. With careful placement, they soften building lines to help your home blend with surroundings, and provide privacy from roads or nearby neighbors.

SHRUB-STEPPE ALL-STAR **Rabbit-brush** *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*

Uncommon in the Methow Valley, this erect grey-leaved shrub blooms in fall with spectacular golden flowers, as referred to by the genus name. Attractive to butterflies but not to deer, it requires a minimum of water to get established and works well in both landscaping beds and large-scale restoration.

See other
Shrub-Steppe
All-Stars on
pp. 27, 34, and 36.

Grasses						
Native species	Height	Self-seeder	Seeding depth	Good in landscaping beds	Description	Variety name
Bluebunch wheatgrass <i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	2-3'		1/4"	yes	Large bunchgrass. Slow to get established, but tolerates the harshest sites. Dry leaves attractive in fall. Dominant bunchgrass in the Methow Valley.	Whitmar, Anatone, Duffy Creek
Great Basin wildrye <i>Elymus cinereus</i>	5-6'		1/2"	yes	Robust plant that prefers moist sites likes ditches or swales; will form large clumps in the right habitat. Good accent plant in landscapes. Woodland skipper butterfly larvae make nests within rolled-up sections of grass blades.	Magnar, Toppenish
Idaho fescue <i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	18"-2'		1/4"	yes	Wiry leaves with compact growth form; slow to get established from seed. Beautiful ornamental; widely used landscaping plant.	Joseph, Winchester
Prairie junegrass <i>Koelaria cristata</i>	1-2'		1/8"	yes	Attractive bunchgrass with compact growth form. Very useful in landscaped beds. Often found growing with bluebunch wheatgrass.	Wallow
Indian ricegrass <i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	18"-2'	yes	1-4"	yes	Beautiful ornamental; loves sandy soils. Hard brown seeds were traditional food source for Methow people. Mule deer graze it heavily; mourning doves and rodents eat the seeds.	Nezpar
Sandberg bluegrass <i>Poa secunda</i>	1-2'	yes	1/4"		One of first native grasses to come up in the spring. Good choice for reducing fire risk.	Duffy Creek
Sand dropseed <i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	18"-2'	yes	1/8"		Well-adapted for sandy soils. Matures late in season. Tiny seeds, four million per pound. Spreads rapidly in disturbed areas; invasive in landscaping beds.	Columbia
Needle-and-thread grass <i>Stipa comata</i>	2-3'	yes	1/4"	yes	Attractive seed heads with spreading awns up to four inches. Difficult to germinate; consider planting plugs.	
Western needlegrass <i>Stipa occidentalis</i>	18"-2'	yes	1/4"		Long awns on seeds make sowing difficult; awns can be harmful to pets. Commercial seed is hard to find; consider hand-collecting or planting plugs.	
Non-native species						
Intermediate wheatgrass <i>Agropyron intermedium</i>	2-4'		1/2"		Weakly sod-forming, likes a little moisture. Good for north-facing slopes.	Greenar
Slender wheatgrass <i>Agropyron trachycaulum</i>	2-3'		1/4"		Good nurse crop, quick to get established, short-lived. Native to Rocky Mountains.	
Sheep fescue <i>Festuca ovina</i>	1-2'		1/4"		Low-growing, aggressive colonizer. Good for fire fuel reduction. Has been used for drought-tolerant lawns.	Covar, Durar
Creeping red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>	1-2'		1/4"		Low-growing with a spreading habit. Prefers more moisture than most bunchgrasses. Good for drought-tolerant lawns.	
Triticale <i>Triticale hexaploide</i>	2-4'	yes	1/2"		Good cover crop for old agricultural areas; builds soil. Useful for long-term weed control. Provides good wildlife forage.	
Regreen Wheat X Wheatgrass hybrid <i>triticum x agropyron</i>	2-3'		1/2"		A form of sterile wheat; will not self-seed. Use as a nurse crop; sow ten pounds per acre. Vigorous growth provides mulch in the future.	