

Curmudgeon's Garden



A Gallery of Weeds, Invasives, & Other Unsavory Characters
January 24 to March 14, 2015

By Doug Burgess

Hayward Area Recreation and Park District

Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center

4901 Breakwater Avenue, Hayward, CA 94545

(510) 670-7270, Open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 10:00am to 5:00pm

Reception Saturday January 31 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Curmudgeon's Garden

We invented “weeds” when we invented agriculture. Before that our ancestors merely avoided harmful plants and ignored the ones that did not provide benefits. Once we started cultivating food species, other plants that competed with our efforts became the weeds. Some of these weeds have been with us ever since. The most common are so dependent on human activity that they no longer exist in the wild. We have been pulling weeds, burning them, poisoning them, stomping them for thousands of years, yet they seem to be gaining on us.

Many of the older weeds came from Europe when immigrants imported their gardens, farm animals, and land use methods. Our list of weeds has expanded to include unsightly plants in our yards and new invasive plants we have inadvertently introduced into our open spaces. We have intentionally introduced food plants and ornamentals that have escaped cultivation or have since fallen from favor. Weeds are certainly one of our closest and most enduring relationships with the natural world around us.

There is no universally accepted definition of a “weed,” but we can group them into four loose categories:

- Weeds that compete with crops, on big farms and small gardens, including Wild Oats, Curly Dock, and the Mustards.
- Weeds that were intentionally introduced as agricultural products or horticultural plantings, such as Salsify, Cardoon (artichoke thistle), Bermudagrass, Fennel, Himalayan Blackberry, Teasel, and Filaree.
- Weeds accidentally introduced such as Russia Thistle, Italian Thistle, Bristly Ox Tongue, Spurges, and Yellow Star Thistle.
- Native plants that don't appeal to us for one reason or another as in Poison Oak, Telegraph Weed, Tar Weeds, Jimson Weed.

Here is a gallery of Bay Area weeds, aliens, and other unwanted plants growing without cultivation, a sort of curmudgeon's garden. We should strive to better understand these plants that we dismiss so easily but that plague us so relentlessly. Many of these weeds can be found in the Hayward Shoreline Park and all can be found within a few miles of the Interpretative Center.

Key

👁 = Observed on the Hayward Shoreline

📷 = Photographed on the Hayward Shoreline

CN = California Native

AN = Native of the Americas outside of California

Bellardia, *Bellardia trixago*, a winter annual, sometimes biennial, 8 to 30 inches



tall. It is a hemiparasite. It has a modified root that penetrates the host plant and connects to the xylem, phloem, or both. The hemiparasite (or semi parasite) takes water and nutrients from the host but has green chlorophyll to manufacture its own food. Bellardia attaches to the roots of other plants rather than the stems as Mistletoe does.

“A new station reported for *Bellardia trixago* (Lousewort). In April, 1914, this plant was flowering in abundance on a small plot of land in East Oakland, where the soil had been disturbed a few years ago by deep cutting of street grades. It was called to the attention of the Botanical Society through specimens collected by school girls.” Authors D. W. de Veer and M. Alice King, Madroño,

Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 20, 1916), p. 26

Bermudagrass, *Cynodon dactylon*, is a successful and welcomed pasture plant



or an evil invader that can't be killed, depending on who you are. It was intentionally introduced into this country about 1750 as a pasture plant and is still planted in pastures and lawns. It has now spread to all of the warm areas of the country. It can survive drought, poor soil, most herbicides, and repeated trampling. It spreads by seeds, runners, and rhizomes. In 1941 Robbins reported

“It is very drought resistance and also tolerant of alkali. It is on record that ‘patches of Bermuda grass near Mecca, California, although submerged in the Salton Sea for over two years, were still alive and making new growth from the stems when that body of water finally evaporated to a lower level.’ 👁

Big Leaf Mistletoe, *Phoradendron macrophyllum*, and Common Locust Tree, *Robinia pseudoacacia*.



“Plant parasites can be hemiparasitic (semiparasitic) with photosynthetic leaves (such as mistletoe), or holoparasitic and completely dependent on their host (such as dodder).”
<http://waynesword.palomar.edu>

Bristly Ox Tongue, *Picris echioides*, Erect winter and/or summer annual or biennial to nearly 1 m tall, with milky sap, stiff-bristly foliage, and yellow dandelion-like flowerheads. Plants exist as basal rosettes until branched flower stems develop at maturity. Roadsides, waste places, fields, pastures, crop fields, orchards, vineyards, landscaped areas, gardens, other disturbed open places. Most common in seasonally wet places. Common throughout most of California, except deserts and



Great Basin. Native to Europe. One of our most common weeds. 🙄

Bull Thistle, *Cirsium vulgare*, This is one of our largest and showiest alien thistles. However, it is not all that aggressive and the plants are usually solitary. In Thomas Martyn's time (England 1794) it was known as Spear Thistle (*Carduus lanceolatus*) and he wrote "Nothing is easier to destroy than this and most of the other Thistles, for being biennial plants, they require only to be mowed down before they perfect their seed." 🙄



Buffalobur, *Solanum rostratum* "is native to the American southwest where it evolved to grow in the highly disturbed areas caused by the buffalo wallows. Buffalobur is a summer annual with prickles and star-shaped hairs and are similar to the perennial horse nettles and nightshades described above. Unlike the perennial horse nettles and nightshades, buffalobur has leaves that are deeply lobed from halfway to all the way to the midrib, and the lobes are toothed or lobed again. In addition, buffalobur berries are completely enclosed in a spiny bur-like calyx. Under windy conditions in fall, buffalo bur plants sometimes detach at the base and scatter seeds as they tumble along the ground. Buffalo bur is a common contaminant of bird seed and is almost exclusively associated with locations where people have bird feeders or where bird seed has been distributed." (DiTomaso) **AN**

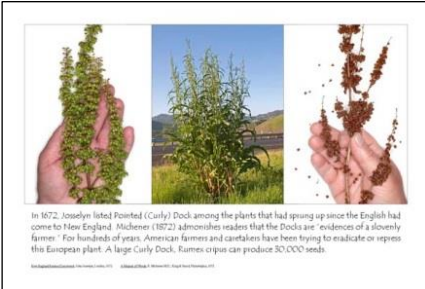


Cudweed, *Gnaphalium luteo-album*, “This adventive from the Old World is a common weed of the San Francisco Peninsula in Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco Counties: also from the San Joaquin Valley to Southern California where it occurs in alfalfa fields and along irrigation ditches.”



Weeds of California, Robbins, Bellue, and Ball, 1941
Now it is found everywhere! 🙄

Curly Dock. In 1672, John Josselyn listed Pointed (Curly) Dock among the plants that had sprung up since the English had come to New England. Michener (1872) admonishes readers that the Docks are “evidences of a slovenly farmer.” For hundreds of years, American farmers and caretakers have been trying to eradicate or repress this European plant. A large Curly Dock, *Rumex crispus* can produce 30,000 seeds. 🙄



Dodder and Pickle Weed

Parasite: Dodder (*Cuscuta salina*)

Dodder has tiny white blossoms and remarkably small yellow orange stems. It’s thread-like tendrils invade its host and sucks out water, minerals, and food. 🙄 **CN**

Host: Pickleweed (*Salicornia virginica*)

Pickleweed has fat green watery stems. It can extract salt from brackish water thus providing itself (and its parasite) with fresh water. 🙄 **CN**



Fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare*, also called Sweet Fennel, one of the most common weeds in the Bay Area. It was likely brought to this area as a food by immigrants. It can still be found in grocery stores. Like our other food plants that have escaped, after a few generations of wild breeding they lose the traits that were so carefully bred by generations of farmers. 🙄



Filaree, *Erodium* sp., one of the earliest European plants to invade California. It was brought to the new world by the Spanish as a grazing and fodder plant. It was wide spread here before California became a state. When Fremont entered Mexican California the native Americans had already incorporated Filaree into their culture of useful plants. The tail of the seed curls up like a crock screw when it dries. When the winter rains come the moisture causes the tail to unwind which screws the seed into the ground. 👁



Glasswort, *Salsola soda*, an European shore line plant that that derived its name because after being burned it's ashes were used as a source of "Soda Ash" for glass making.



Euphorbia is a genus of plants in the Euphorbiaceae family. It contains at least 2,100 species and is one of the most diverse groups of flowering plants on earth. Many of the species are known as "spurges" and are weeds. "Spurge" comes from Old French espurge, espurgier to purge.



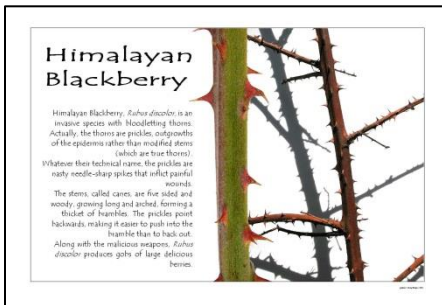
Gopher Spurge, *Euphorbia lathyris*, like other spurges exudes a white latex sap when the stems are broken. This sap is poisonous and a skin and eye irritant, cable of cause temporary blindness in some people. Spurges have become extensive and noxious weeds in California and include Oblong

spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*) and Spotted Spurge (*Euphorbia maculate*). The Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a culturally and commercially important spurge. It is particularly well known for its red and green foliage and is widely used in Christmas floral displays. It derives its common English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first United States Minister to Mexico, who introduced the plant into the United States in 1825.

Green Wattle, *Acacia decurrens*. A native of Australia that does well here in California due to similar climates. It was likely introduced intentionally as an ornamental. Unfortunately, as at this Persidio location, it sometimes does too well, crowding out all other species.



Himalayan Blackberry, *Rubus discolor*, is an invasive species with bloodletting thorns. Actually, the thorns are prickles, outgrowths of the epidermis rather than modified stems (which are true thorns). Whatever their technical name, the prickles are nasty needle-sharp spikes that inflict painful wounds. The prickles point backwards, making it easier to push into the bramble than to back out. Along with the malicious weapons, this plant produces gobs of large delicious berries. “Luther Burbank introduced the Himalaya

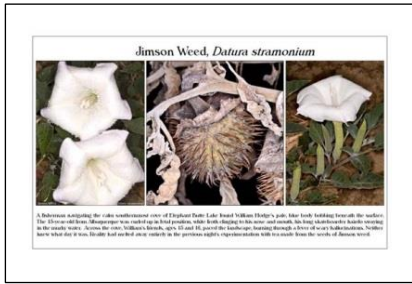


Blackberry in 1885. Obtaining the Himalaya berry was one of his comparatively easy endeavors. Burbank simply exchanged seeds with a source in India. He named the best of his seedlings so raised 'Himalaya Giant' to commemorate its origin. The one he named and released has made itself thoroughly wild on the West Coast in northern California well into British Columbia. Birds spread the berries. The root-systems are tough and extensive. Native vegetation is choked-out by the invasive bramble.”(Jacobson) 👁

Italian Thistle, *Carduus pycnocephalus*, other thistles such as Bull Thistle and Milk Thistle have large showy flowers, not Italian Thistle, it’s flowers are small and unimpressive. It has spines not only on the leaves but up and down the stems on wings. It seems to be a late introduction to California. It was not reported by Greene in 1894 or by Smiley in 1922. 👁 📷



Jimson Weed, *Datura stramonium*, “A fisherman navigating the calm southernmost cove of Elephant Butte Lake found



William Hodge's pale, blue body bobbing beneath the surface. The 15-year-old from Albuquerque was curled up in fetal position, white froth clinging to his nose and mouth, his long skateboarder hairdo swaying in the murky water. Across the cove, William's friends, ages 15 and 16, paced the landscape, burning through a fever of scary hallucinations. Neither knew what day it

was. Reality had melted away entirely in the previous night's experimentation with tea made from the seeds of Jimson weed.” (Shepard) **AN** 👁

Lamb's Quarters, *Chenopodium album*, seem to have been a camp follower for



thousands of years. Originally (maybe) from the Eastern Mediterranean, this plant is now found around the world. Labeled a weed, called a food, it has been credited with harboring pests that destroy crops and with curing many of the ills of its two legged companions. Since Neolithic times, the seeds were ground to a flour or eaten whole. The leaves were and are eaten as pot-herbs. 👁

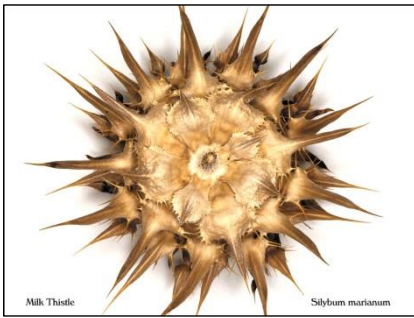
Mediterranean Barley, *Hordeum marinum*, and its close relatives, subspecies,



Hare Barley, and others are adapted for growing on salted soils. These are very common on the bay shores.



Milk Thistle, *Silybum marianum*, has other common names including cardus



marianus, milk thistle, blessed milk thistle, Marian Thistle, Mary Thistle, Saint Mary's Thistle, Mediterranean milk thistle, variegated thistle and Scotch thistle. Milk Thistle has been used in herbal medicine for at least 2000 years. Ancient Greek and Roman writers refer to this plant in their herbal gardens. It was likely taken to England by the Romans and then by the English to America. Stearns included it in his 1801 "American" herbal, likely because it was so

commonly used even though not native. 👁

Mustard Family, we have about 14 species of mustard weeds in California



(Ditomaso, Joseph), all from the Brassicaceae family. None are native. Black Mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and White Mustard (*Sinapis alba*) were previously used to make the mustard condiment. The Black Mustard has been replaced by Indian Mustard (*Brassica juncea*). Wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) and the garden radish (*Raphanus sativus*) also in the mustard family. The turnip is the root of Birdrape Mustard cultivars (*Brassica rapa*).

👁

Plantain (Narrow-Leaf), *Plantago lanceolata*, also called Buckhorn Plantain, Rib-



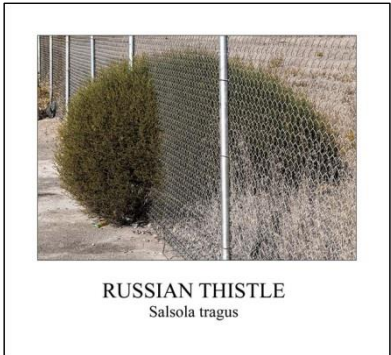
Wort, and Rib-Grass. This plantain is listed among "Of Such Plant As Have Sprung Up Since the English Planted and Kept Cattle In New England" (Josselyn, 1672). In Gerard's Herbal of 1633 he says "Ribwort growth almost everywhere in the borders of path-ways and fertile Fields." In DiTomaso's identification software of 2007 he states it "Inhabits roadsides, railway rights-of-way, waste places, landscaped areas, gardens, foot paths, urban sites, orchards, vineyards, pastures,

other disturbed places." 👁 📷

Prickly Wild Lettuce, *Lactuca serriola*, is closely related to our garden salad lettuce. The wild lettuce is also called the Compass Plant because its leaves tend to point North-South. It exudes milky latex to which some people are allergic. 👁



Russian Thistle, *Salsola tragus*. Many plants have names that mislead us. Italian Thistle is not from Italy. Canada Thistle did not originate in Canada. Russian Thistle, however, is as it is named, from Russia. This tumble weed has become a quintessential symbol of the American west even though it did not arrive in America until 1877. “In 1881, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture James M. Rusk reported that a troublesome, new weed was spreading across the farms on the northern Great Plains. Unlike other weeds, this species did not spend its life rooted to the soil; instead it tumbled and bounced across

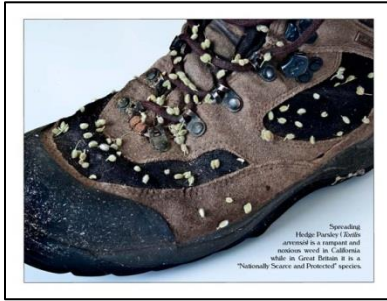


fields with every gust of wind. The weed had sharp, spiny leaves that frequently lacerated the flesh of both horse and rancher. The plant was exploiting the vast areas of the plains quickly, thriving in regions too barren to support any other flora. Its destructive spines and ability to generate and disseminate seeds were prompting many panic-stricken farmers to abandon their horses and fields. Equipped with such biological adaptations, the tumble became the scourge of the west.” (Young). 👁

Smilo Grass *Piptatherum miliaceum*, was intentionally introduced into California in the early 19th century for cattlemen who wished to “improve” brush lands for grazing. It was still being recommend for grazing and re-vegetation after forest fires in mid-century. It is currently being suggested for the uptake of heavy metals at contaminated soil sites. Smilo Grass is on everyone’s weeds list but is generally rated as “mildly invasive.” 👁 📷



Spreading Hedge Parsley, *Torilis arvensis*, is a rampant and noxious weed in California while in Great Britain it is a “Nationally Scarce and Protected” species. All those tiny burs that stick to your pants, socks, and boots have just one purpose, to spread the plant even more.

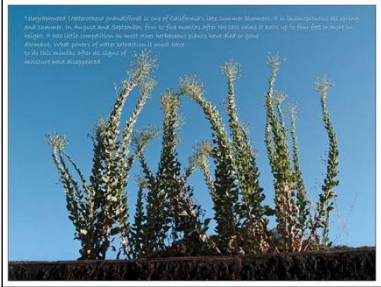


Spotted Spurge, *Euphorbia maculata*, “The milky sap of spurge species contains various diterpene esters that can cause contact dermatitis in humans and animals. Ingestion of some species can also cause mild to severe digestive tract irritation and on rare occasions, can be fatally toxic. Spotted spurge has been responsible for the deaths of lambs grazing on heavily infested pasture in the southeastern U.S. Spotted spurge is the most commonly encountered weedy spurge in California. Throughout California, except deserts and Great Basin, to 200 m. All contiguous states except possibly Colorado. Spotted spurge is native to the eastern U.S. (DiTomaso)



Stinkwort, *Dittrichia graveolens*, This was an obscure weed a decade ago, it was not on many of the Noxious Weed lists. In the last ten years its’ population has exploded. Like many of our native late summer plants it doesn’t appear until months after the rains have ended. It then grows to a foot or so high and has a mass of tiny yellow flowers, followed by a gillizon seeds. The brown remains of last year’s crop are prominent through the following spring. It’s called Stinkwort because is exudes a stinky resin to conserve water. Our own native late summer plants also use resin to conserve water, some people even like the odor, no

one seems to enjoy the stink from Stinkwort. 👁 📷



Telegraphweed *Heterotheca grandiflora*,

Telegraphweed is actually a native California plant that illustrates three weed facts.

First, despite being a native, it did not contribute to the efforts of early agriculturalists; hence it was given the “weed” part of its name.

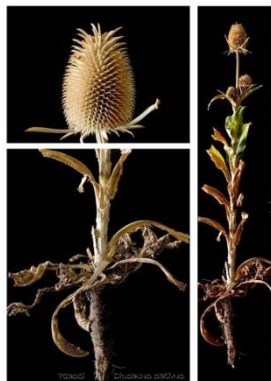
Second, while being a native, it does have some common weed attributes such as being able to germinate in barren distributed locations like

highway shoulders.

Third, like our other late summer plants (natives and invasives) it doesn’t start growing until long after the rains have stopped and there is little competition.

CN 👁

Teasel, *Dipsacus sativus*, was intentionally imported into this country by early settlers. The hard dense pointed heads would be mounted in a wood frame to make a comb for carding wool. One of the common names for this plant is “Fuller’s Teasel”. A fuller was the person who did this kind of work.



Threecorner Leek *Allium Triquetrum*. “Three-corner leek is a perennial bulb



forming plant with grass-like leaves. Foliage and bulbs have a strong onion or garlic odor when crushed. Dairy products and meat from cattle that ingest the foliage or bulbs can be tainted with an onion flavor. Allium species contain sulfur compounds that destroy red blood cells when a large amount is ingested. Animals and humans who ingest a large amount of the foliage and/or bulbs within a short period or over many weeks can develop anemia. However, toxicity problems usually only arise when onions comprise a large proportion of the diet. Cattle and horses are more susceptible than sheep and goats. Wild garlic, cultivated onion and

garlic, and a few other species are most often associated with the disorder. Plants have 3-sided flower stems to 0.5 m tall and open, lax umbels of white flowers that typically droop to one side. Three-corner leek has escaped cultivation as a garden ornamental and is especially common in some urban areas. Native to the western Mediterranean region. Gardens, landscaped areas, turf, disturbed places. Often grows in partially shaded areas. North Coast, lowlands of the North Coast Ranges, Central Coast, San Francisco Bay region, Sacramento Valley, to 100 m.” (DiTomaso & XID Services

Tree Tobacco, *Nicotiana glauca*, is closely related to *Nicotiana tabacum*, or cultivated tobacco, only more toxic. It is said to come from South America but Southern California Indians used it. Romero writes “The leaves were steamed and applied externally as a poultice over the swollen parts of the the throat caused by inflammation of throat glands, and also for scrofula (*a type of tuberculosis*). While the latter malsady didn’t exist among Indians, yet they treated and cured some of the whites who had it, with *Nicotiana glauca*” 👁 📷



Willowherb, *Epilobium brachycarpum*, also called Willowweed. This is a native California plant that is adapted to the same disturbed environments in which many weeds grow. The flowers are tiny and foliage unimpressive. For many gardeners and landscapers it is just another weed. **CN**



Wild Oats in Feb, *Avena fatua*, is native to Africa and Asia. It was introduced into North America as a contaminant in crop seed and feed by the early European settlers. Records indicate that “Wild Oats” has been present in Canada for more than 3 centuries and was established in California by 1824, if not before. It is now the most common grass in the Bay Area and a major component of our Golden Hills in summer. 👁



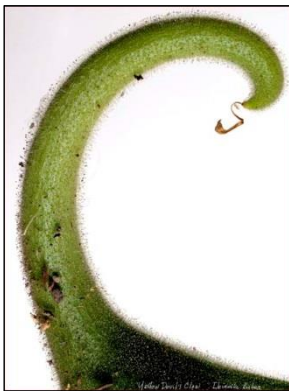
Wild Radish, *Raphanus sativus*, San Francisco Presidio. The Wild Radish is our garden vegetable gone wild. It has morphed into one of our commonest weeds. Along the way it sometimes hybridizes with other close relatives. If it is a true *Raphanus sativus*, the garden plant, or mongrelized with *Raphanus raphanistrum* the Jointed Charlock makes no difference, the thousands of years of careful breeding of the root is lost. Wild food champions claim the Wild Radish greens can be eaten but none propose eating the root as we do with the garden variety. 👁



Wire Vine (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*) is usually sold as a pot plant, but if it escapes and conditions are favorable, it can engulf everything. This is what has happened in the lower Lobo Creek in the Presidio. Ansel Adams' boyhood home was on the banks of this same creek.

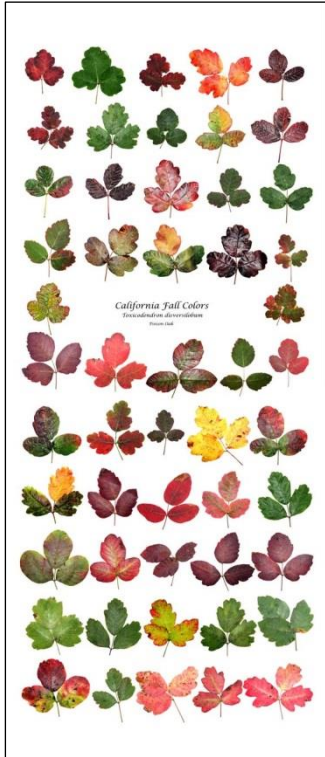


Yellow Devil's Claw, Unicorn Plant, *Ibicella lutea*, is a native of South and Central America that has been expanding its range. As we move dirt from place to place and drive with mud-caked tires down the road we spread the seeds. It has large leaves and yellow flowers and appears similar to domestic melon plants. If a leaf is damaged it exudes an unpleasant putrid odor. The seed pod grows a long horn like appendage. When the pod dries the horn splits and makes a large split hook. Experts believe the hook is intended to catch the hooves of large animal to help spread the seeds. **AN**



Yellow Star Thistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, the plant hikers hate. In the 1970's and 1980's Yellow Star Thistle suddenly seemed to be everywhere, ruining many of our favorite hiking trails. It became one of the most recognized weeds in the Bay Area. This plant wasn't new to California, but like many weeds it had hung around in small numbers for decades until its population reached a critical mass and then it exploded everywhere. Since then the USDA has developed and released a number of biological agents that attack the seed head. We will never be free of Yellow Star Thistle but its numbers have been reduced. Alice Eastwood recorded it on the cobblestone streets of San Francisco in the 1890's. Salisbury reports that in England it is also called St. Barnaby's Thistle though it doesn't seem to have any connection to the Feast of Barnabas. Parkinson and Gerard both report that the seeds of St. Barnaby's Thistle have medical uses however modern internet searches only indicate the plant is toxic to horses.





Poison Oak, *Toxicodendron diversilobum*, isn't California's State Shrub, but it could be. It is the most common shrub in the state. It grows everywhere up to 4,000 feet elevation. Until easterners began importing trees that turned color in the fall, Poison Oak provided much of our late year reds, pinks, and yellows. Humans seem to be the only animal allergic to Poison Oak's Urushiol Oil, the active agent that makes us itch and blister. Authorities claim that 10% to 20% of the population is immune to the oil. It is often stated that Native Americans are immune, yet ethno botany reports of Indian uses of native plants have a number of "treatments" for Poison Oak. The Indians did use the sap for dyeing basket materials and as temporary tattoos as the saps turn inky black after being exposed to the air. It is not incongruous that Native Americans might have used Poison Oak and also been sensitive to it. For instance some people have serious food allergies with peanuts or shell fish but avoid the reactions by being alert and aware. **CN** 👁

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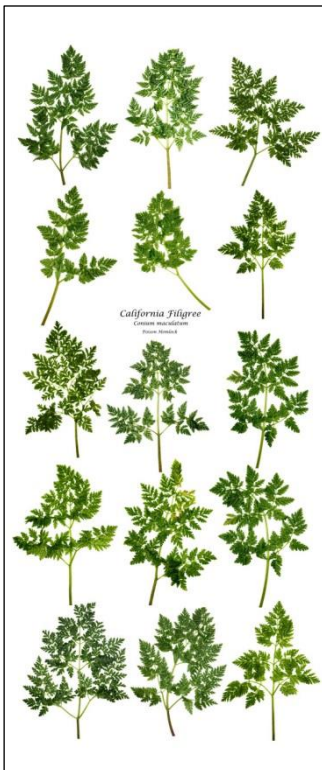


Castor Bean is a European agricultural crop that has escaped into the wild from our farms. It is the source of laxative and high grade lubrication oil. It is also the source of one of the world's deadliest poisons, used in ancient and modern time for assassinations. On 7 September 1978 the Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov was shot in the leg in public on Waterloo Bridge in the middle of London by a man using a weapon built into an umbrella. The weapon embedded a small pellet in Markov's leg which contained ricin. Markov died four days later. The seeds superficially resemble the bodies of ticks, particularly ticks engorged with blood, hence its botanical name, Ricinus, the Latin word for tick.





Spines and Prickles: Himalayan Blackberry is an invasive species with bloodletting thorns. Actually, the thorns are prickles, outgrowths of the epidermis rather than modified stems (which are true thorns). Whatever their technical name, the prickles are nasty needle-sharp spikes that inflict painful wounds. The prickles point backwards, making it easier to push into the bramble than to back out. Along with the malicious weapons, this plant produces gobs of large delicious berries. The garden rose is not to be outdone when it comes to prickles. Spiny Cocklebur's long sharp spines pierce the lips, cheeks, and tongue of any animal that attempts to eat it.



Poison Hemlock is the plant used to execute Socrates. It is from Europe and closely related to and sometimes mistaken for Carrot, Celery, Parsnip, Parsley, Dill, Caraway, Chervil, Sweet Cicely, Fennel, and Coriander

PLATO: PHAEDO, 399 B.C., SCENE: The Prison of Socrates.

" and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel; and he said, no; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words) -- he said: Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?" 🙄

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It's A Weed, But It's A Native!

Even some of our natives are called weeds. A few are labelled that way only because they resemble closely related plants. Marsh Dodder is native to our Pickle Weed marshes but looks very much like 6 other Dodders (both native and foreign) that are troublesome weeds in agriculture. California's Cobwebby Thistle and other native thistles have been undoubtedly removed mistakenly because there is no doubt that they are thistles from their appearance, even though they are not troublesome.

Other natives do exhibit weed-like patterns. Horseweed, Telegraphweed, and Willowherb (also called Willow weed) often line the shoulders of our roads because, like many invasive weeds, they can grow where almost nothing else can. Coyote Brush and Poison Oak often sprout and cover former grazing lands once the cattle are removed. Land managers and developers may view them as weeds to be removed later.

Some are called "weed" with little justification. Elegant Tarweed, Hayfield Tarweed, Spikeweed, and others are unpalatable to grazers. Cattle will eat around these plants exposing them to ranchers.

"Weed" is not a technical term. To the farmer and gardener, any plant competing with crops is a weed. To the city manager, any plant growing in a vacant lot that isn't tidy is a weed, and the owners will be fined if it is not cut. To the home owner, any plant in his yard he did not plant is a weed. To managers of natural lands, any non-natives, including prized horticultural plants, are likely seen as weeds. "Weed" is not a technical term. It is a cultural designation that shifts and morphs with time, place, and human activity.

Curmudgeon's Library

Most books on weeds only cover how to identify and kill them or simply how to rid your yard, your garden, or your fields of them. Few precious ones tell us stories or help us to know the weeds in our neighborhood. Here is a list of books that enrich our knowledge of weeds. All are available on the internet a low cost (<http://www.addall.com>) or are available free on the listed web site.

[My Weeds, A Gardener's Botany](#), Sara Stein, University Press of Florida, 1988. Stein writes of her attempts to create a garden on a New England farm lot. Her investigations into the history and evolution of this landscape from undisturbed forest to a modern bramble-covered lot are definitely worth reading.

[New-Englands Rarities Discovered](#), John Josselyn, printed for the author 1672, London. Josselyn lived in New England in 1638 for 15 months and again in 1663 for 8 years. After returning to England he published "Rarities". He was not a naturalist but his observations on the flora and fauna are among the earliest. Of special note is his chapter "Of Such Plants as have Sprung up Since the English Planted and kept Cattle in New England", the first recorded observation of the weeds settlers brought from Europe. (*When reading this old type face remember the "f" and the "s" look alike.*)

[A Weed By Any Other Name](#), "The Virtues of a Messy Lawn, or Learning to Love the Plants We Don't Plant", Nancy Gift, Beacon Press, 2009. Nancy is a young mother, a professor of environmental studies, a former acting director of the Rachel Carson Institute. Nancy's work is about finding a balance between the pleasure of weeding out the invaders versus the dangers of herbicides and other anti-weed treatments. This is a balancing act we all need to do.

[Weeds of California](#), Robbins, Bellue and Ball, published by the state in 1941, and reissued in the 1950's and again in the 1970's this was the compendium of weeds, written from the view of agriculturalists. It is still a valuable resource today.

[Invasive Plants of California's Wildlands](#), Bossard, Randall, and Hoshovsky, in the last decades we have become more concerned by the invasive plants in our wild lands.

[Photo-illustrated Weed List and Guide, Appendix 2, Vegetation Management of Tidal Marsh Edges](#), available free from Marin Audubon Society at <http://www.marinaudubon.org/publications.php>

[A Field Identification Guide, Selected Tidal Marsh Plant Species of the San Francisco Estuary](#), by Peter Baye, available free from San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project at http://www.spartina.org/project_documents/field_guide_tide_plants_low-res_200703.pdf

[Ecological Imperialism, The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900](#), Alfred W. Crosby, Cambridge University Press, 1986. This is a scholarly work loaded with foot notes and references. Chapter 7 covers weeds.