



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Fall 2021

Issue 52

sam.extension.colostate.edu

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How Eating Locally Builds a Better, Stronger Colorado

Adrian Card, Boulder County Extension

Now is the time to lean into eating locally. Colorado's Department of Agriculture hosts the Colorado Proud program, a label and logo for consumers to easily identify Colorado produce, meats, grains and value-added food products with Colorado ingredients. While August is Colorado Proud month, September yields even more local ag products.



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Colorado Sustainable Small Acreage News is published and edited by Kara Harders, Small Acreage Management Coordinator, NRCS/CSU Extension, 248 Dozier Ave., Canon City, CO 81212
Kara.harders@colostate.edu

Please direct all inquiries regarding this publication to Kara Harders

Eating Locally continued from page 1

Supporting Colorado food and agriculture

Colorado agriculture benefits from your purchases through farm income and market share preservation among wholesale and retail buyers. Consumers send signals to the entire supply chain, and the more you purchase, the more enters the supply chain. That equates to more income for Colorado farms and ranches.

Farmers in the Tri-River Area (Mesa, Delta and Montrose) counties especially need your support. Suffering the triple whammy of drought, low snowpack (low or no irrigation water for 2021) and closures of Interstate 70, creating increased marketing costs or complete loss of sales, it has never been more important to buy Colorado peaches, onions, sweet corn, beef, etc.

Creating healthy habits, supporting small businesses

When buying local, you also reap the benefits of a whole foods diet. If you are buying Colorado agricultural products, you are likely not buying large volumes of processed foods. Find simple recipes to prepare and cook at home, your health improves, and you feel better from fresh food.

And increasingly, Colorado chefs are purchasing Colorado agricultural products and integrating them into seasonal menus. We all need variety in our diets. Your patronage at restaurants offering these special plates creates benefits for you and the upstream supply chain.

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Eating Locally continued from page 2

Strengthening local economies

In this COVID-19 era, we see clear examples of the connectedness of local, regional and global supply chains. From microchips delays stunting car production, labor supplies challenging local retailers and the baffling run on toilet paper early in the pandemic, our economies are built lean on low-cost inputs (materials, labor, etc.) and are more fragile that they may appear.

Farmers and ranchers are also affected by these supply chain challenges for both farm inputs — seed, machinery, equipment parts, etc. — but also with trucking logistics for hauling product from farm to market. The I-70 closure hit some producers first with ability to truck product in farm-owned trucks to Front Range markets, causing increased costs due to detours south and north of I-70. Then for some farms, trucking companies that backhaul product to distribution points east of the Continental Divide would not drive west to the Tri-River Area due to the detours around I-70. By some estimates those farms lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales.

Equal to supply chain disruptions, labor markets are also extremely slim for farmers and ranchers. While farmers and ranchers have the option to contract with H-2A international workers, provided the ag employer has the ability to provide for H-2A worker housing, for those unable to meet this H-2A program requirement or for those needing English-speaking workers to staff direct-to-consumer sales, local workers available and willing to work on farms and ranches are nonexistent in many parts of Colorado.

Make a difference with your dollar

The bottom line is farmers and ranchers need your support, and the first way you can do that is by purchasing their products. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we value what we pay for, meaning purchases with dollars are most often assigned to items that we value most. There are so many great reasons to search for and buy Colorado ag products. Your health and the health of the agricultural economy are among those reasons.



More information

Don't miss the best of the harvest season. Find Colorado products at retailers, restaurants, farm stands and farmers markets near you. For a complete calendar of the produce harvest season, visit coloradoproduce.org and click on the nutrition and health page on the consumers and buyers tab. And to find direct-to-consumer purchasing options, search for the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Farm Fresh Directory.

If this article inspired you to want to shop locally more often, check out the Colorado produce calendar on page the next page!

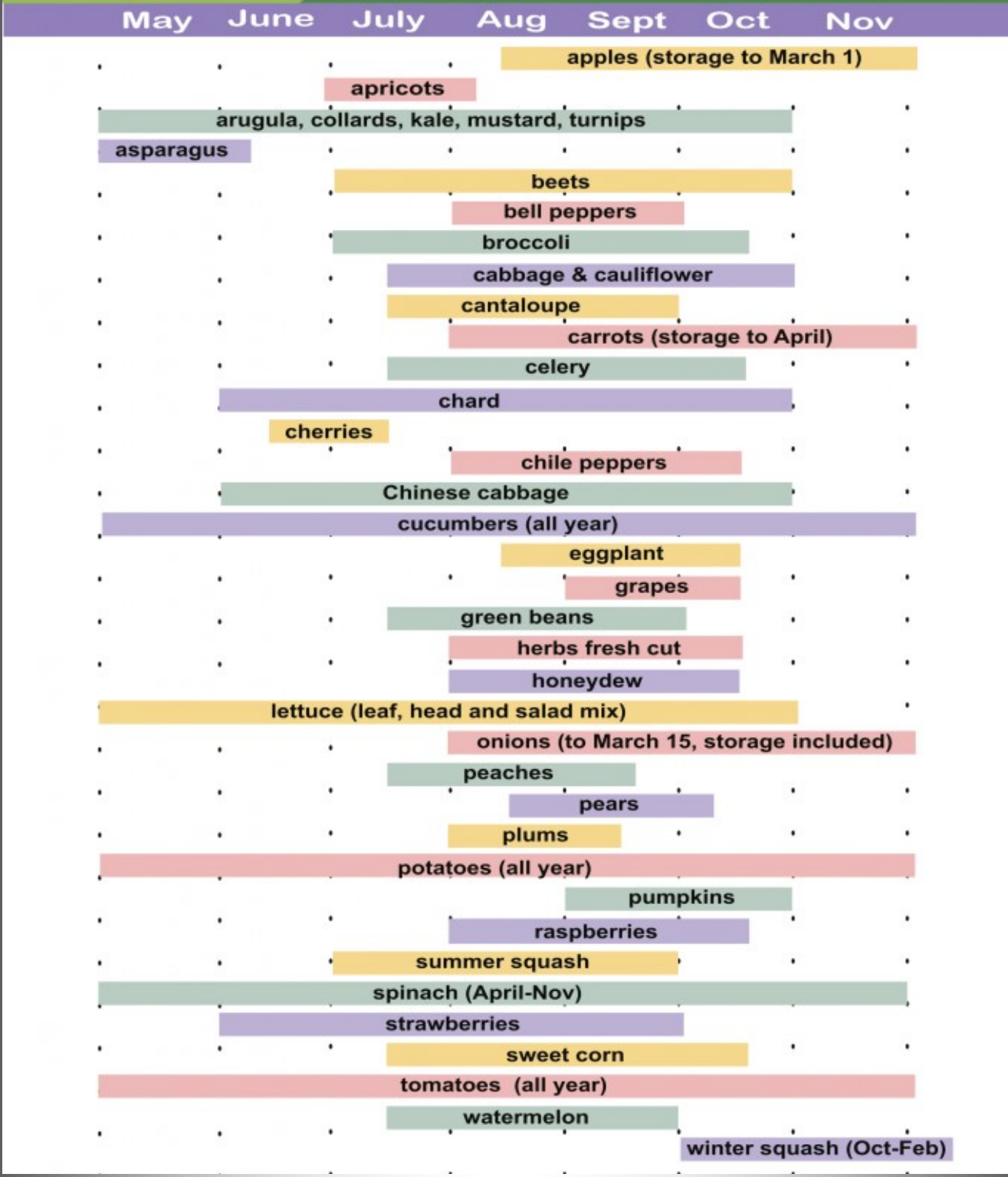


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COLORADO Produce Calendar

Find Colorado produce at coloradoproduce.org
 Approximate availability shown below



Leave it Messy this Fall

Todd Hagenbuch, Routt County CSU Extension

As gardeners, we take a lot of time to make sure our home landscapes look attractive and well-kept. Having untidy spaces can make us feel like we are slacking on our duties, and as the end of the growing season rolls around, many of us are tempted to get out into our yards to 'clean-up' our dying and dried-up plants. I'd encourage you to consider the benefits of leaving it messy, however.

Outside of our landscaped areas, Mother Nature has broken-down and taken care of dead plant material for eons. These plants, finished with their growth for another year, stand testament to the previous year's successes and bear the seeds of a fruitful season. Those seeds not only have the opportunity over the winter to fall out and help start new plants next spring, but also provide necessary food for winter foraging birds and wildlife.

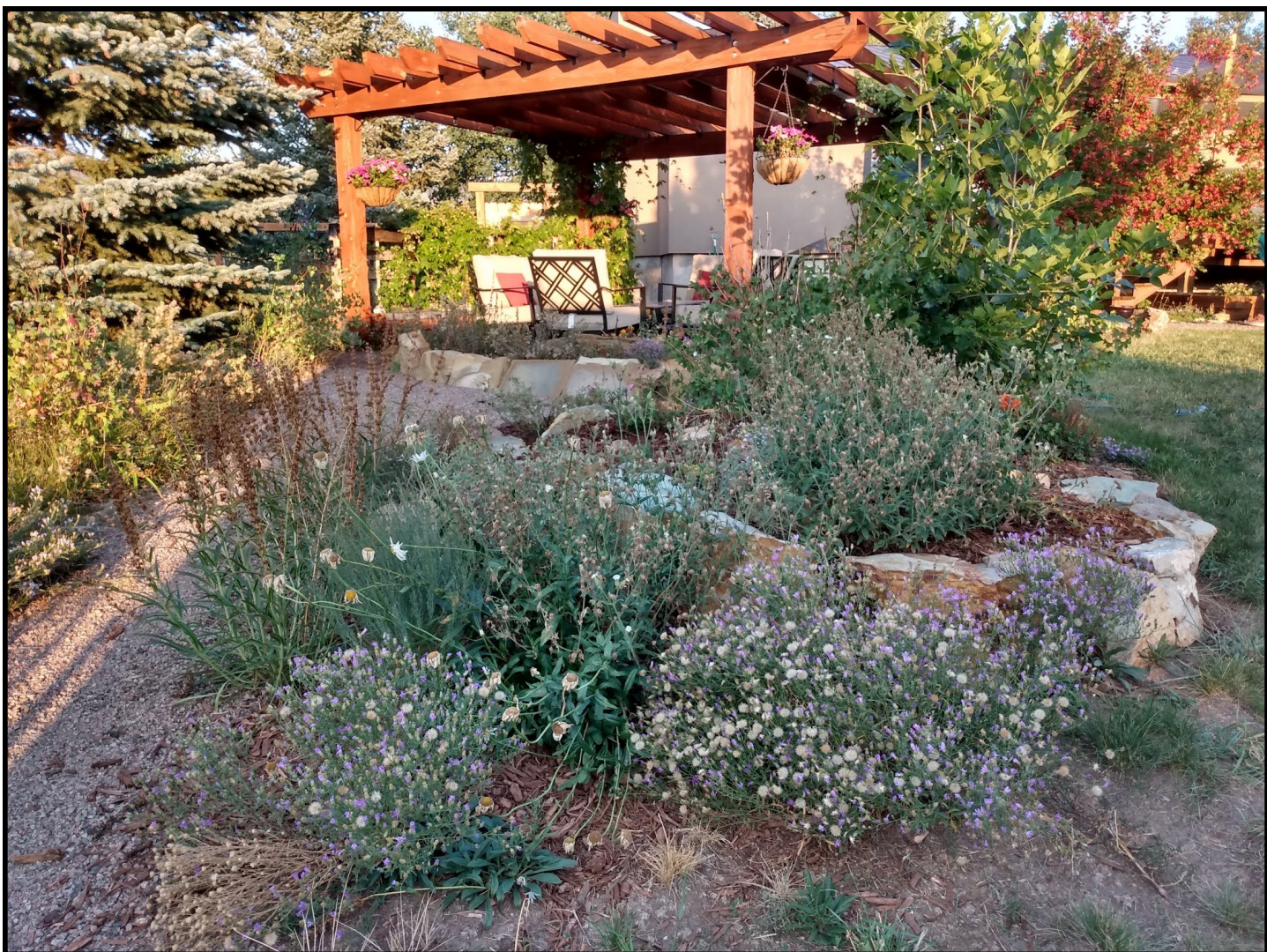
Keeping plants and plant litter on your gardens can also reduce soil erosion and promote water hold-

ing. Dry areas that don't see snow cover for the winter can benefit by having soil shaded and mulched by plants that are slowly breaking-down over the season. Those of us who do have snow cover can watch as the old plants help slow snow-melt and hold moisture when warmer temperatures arrive.

Older plants can also provide visual interest in a winter season that has little. My penstemon heads sticking up from the snow always remind me of the beautiful blooms I enjoyed the past summer and remind me that a new season will be upon us before we know it. Seeing seed heads and older stalks wave in the wind or cast shadows on my wintery flower bed make the winter seem less bleak and more dynamic, which helps me feel better about life on a January day that sees below-zero temps and a frigid wind whistling around my home.

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Messy Garden continued from page 5

If you can leave your yard a bit messy this fall, I'd encourage you to do so. My only words of caution are to make sure you clean up in areas that will promote voles or other garden pests by providing them cover, especially around trees they might like to girdle. Also, be sure to remove any leaves that may be contaminated with a fungal or viral disease to help prevent disease spread in the coming year. Otherwise, enjoy the fruits of your labor a bit longer and know that there will be continued life there after the snow recedes.

If you enjoyed this article, consider reading more articles from CO-Hort's Blog!

<http://csuhort.blogspot.com/>



A rafter of turkeys feeding under a group of Gambel Oaks, within a few yards of a healthy riparian area along a creek.

Turkey Time

Kaitlyn Nafziger, Wildlife Biologist

As Thanksgiving is right around the corner, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on Colorado's Wild Tukeys, the native habitat's they call home, and how we can help improve their habitat. Colorado is home to two subspecies of Wild Turkey, Merriam's Turkey and the Rio Grande Turkey. Rio Grande Turkeys prefer the drainages, riparian areas, and brushy parts of the Eastern plains. They can be found foraging and taking cover among cottonwoods in riparian areas and in mesquite and scrub oak when present near the plains. In the evenings, an entire flock can be found nesting together in a single tree or spread out among two or three trees. Merriam's Turkeys can be found wandering the forests of the Rocky Mountains at elevations of 3,500 to 10,000 feet. They move up and down in elevation depending on the time of year and food availability. In the winter when heavy snows begin falling they will move to lower elevations with lighter snow depths in order to more easily find food, and in the spring when the snow begins to melt they will move back up into higher elevations. They prefer wooded areas that are interspersed with open meadows, so that they can keep

an eye out for predators while foraging for food. Turkeys feed on a wide variety of low growing vegetation as well as insects.

Unfortunately many of Colorado's forests have departed from their historic conditions due to fire suppression. By disrupting the natural fire regime that these Western forests developed with and depended on, the forest ecology has departed from historic conditions. The ponderosa pine forests were historically less dense, with canopy gaps varying in size. This allowed for a diversity of understory vegetation including native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Wild Turkeys depend on these open forest conditions and meadow edges in order to safely forage for food. Riparian habitats have also become degraded by invading Tamarisk which grows in dense patches that decrease forage diversity and availability, as well as visibility for foraging turkeys.

The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies' Private Lands Wildlife Biologists (PLWB) are working with private landowners to improve habitat for Wild Turkeys as well as other forest obligate birds through forest restoration projects.

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Examples of open meadows in a healthy ponderosa pine forest, where native grasses and forbes have regrown, providing good habitat for wildlife.

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By recreating those historic forest conditions we can improve the amount and quality of forage for turkeys. When gaps in the canopy are restored, the amount of sunlight and water reaching the ground increases and in turn this allows for typical understory vegetation to regrow. This not only increase food availability for turkeys, but it also allows them to keep better watch of their surroundings for potential predators. Brush piles can also be constructed around the base of a tree with some of the resulting timber, and this can increase available nesting habitat when placed within a half mile of a water source. Biologists on the plains are also

working with landowners to improve riparian habitat by

removing invasive species in order to encourage native species such as willows and cottonwoods to regrow.

These efforts to protect and improve Wild Turkey habitat are being applied by PLWBs across much of the western Great Plains and eastern Rocky Mountains. This Thanksgiving we are thankful for all of the private landowners who have worked with us to improve wildlife habitat on their properties for not only their benefit, but the benefit of their local communities and everyone who enjoys wildlife viewing!

Ranch to Plate Act (SB21-079)

During the 2021 Legislative Session, SB21-079, the "Ranch to Plate Act" passed and was signed into law. This act promotes increased access for consumers to directly purchase meat and meat products from local ranchers through the use of live animal-share agreements. Primarily, this act clarifies that the sale of animals, animal shares, or meat is exempt from state licensure and inspection by a public health agency, provided proper requirements are met. The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) has provided this guide to help ranchers, livestock owners, and processors understand the applicability of this new legislation and, most importantly, how it interacts with existing state and federal laws governing processing requirements for meat sold in the marketplace.

Summary of the Ranch to Plate Act

The Ranch to Plate Act provides three distinct benefits for individuals looking to increase direct sales to consumers:

Establishes requirements to be exempted from state public health inspection to sell processed meat to end consumers directly

The Ranch to Plate Act allows a person to sell meat, animals, or shares of cattle, calves, sheep, bison, goats, hogs, and rabbits to an informed end consumer for future delivery without regulation or inspection by a public health agency, if the following conditions are met:

- The end consumer must be informed. This means the person making the sale either gives the purchaser a document or conspicuously displays a placard, sign, or card at the point of sale, with the following disclaimer:
 - "The seller of this meat is not subject to licensure, and the sale of animals or meat from this seller is not subject to state regulation or inspection by a

public health agency. Animals or meat purchased from this seller are not intended for resale.";

- The animal or animal share (of at least one percent) and meat being sold are delivered directly from the seller to the informed end consumer;
- The informed end consumer does not resell the product; and,
- The meat is sold only in Colorado.

Additionally, the seller of the live animal is not liable in a civil action for damages caused by inadequate cooking or improper preparation for consumption. The Ranch to Plate Act does not reduce the regulatory authority of CDA to regulate the custom processing of meat animals through licensing and inspection, nor impact the regulations established in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), which the USDA administers. CDA is not considered a public health agency, as defined in the act. Defines "animal share" or community shared agriculture to be at a minimum of one percent ownership. The Ranch to Plate Act clarifies an animal share as an ownership interest of at least one percent in the meat of a live animal. However, ownership must be established while the animal is alive if processed by a custom-exempt processor.

- Ranchers commonly sell ownership interest, or shares, in live meat animals to others to consume for themselves, their family, and non-paying guests. The live animals are usually sold and processed as whole, half or quarters, by a licensed custom exempt processor. The Ranch to Plate Act allows for the distribution of an animal share as low as one percent, which would result in smaller volumes of meat for each animal shareowner.

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Ranch to Plate Act continued from page 9

- Animal share agreement and the transfer of ownership interest must be completed and documented while the animal is alive to comply with state and federal regulations. Animal shares may be processed by a custom-exempt operator or USDA inspected facility.
- Meat sold or donated to end consumers who do not have an ownership interest must still be processed at a USDA-inspected facility.

Clarifies only one brand inspection is required for animals with multiple owners. Livestock remains subject to brand inspection. However, an authorized Colorado brand inspector only needs to inspect the animal once before slaughter regardless of the multiple owners.

To learn more visit:

<https://cofarmtomarket.com/value-added-products/ranch-to-plate/>

CSU Online Land Stewardship Short Courses

Take one or all of these self-paced online courses, developed for the Colorado-arid west soil and climatic conditions.

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Water—The Basics —\$50

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Management of Invasive and Noxious Weeds—\$50

Emergency Preparedness—\$50

Management of Wildlife in Colorado—\$50

*Discounts for bundling classes

Each class aims to help small acreage audiences and takes 5—10 hours to complete at your own pace.

Participants will gain a better understanding of natural resources, localized land strategies, and build an effective long-term land management plan for their property.

More info and register here—

www.online.colostate.edu/badges/land-stewardship/



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Cheatgrass, Mustards, and the Winterbourne Weeds

Kat Caswell, Regional SAM Specialist for the Front Range Region

Winter annual weeds become most noticeable in June or July, when suddenly there are fully mature, or flowering, plants swarming our pastures, gardens, and yards. There is the sudden rush to do something to control them: spray them, mow them, anything to get rid of these weeds! Unfortunately, by the time we spot fully grown winter annual weeds, it is too late to apply the most effective controls. Winter annual weeds are most effectively controlled, in the early spring when plants have first emerged.

First, let's understand the lifecycle of winter annuals. Winter annual weeds emerge in the fall, often growing a rosette or a small seedling. The plant goes dormant for the winter, then reemerges in the spring to grow, flower, produce seed, then die to complete its full lifecycle. This is the same cycle that winter wheat follows. Winter annual weeds can be tricky though; new seedlings can emerge in both the fall and spring. Seedlings that emerge in the fall or spring will set seed at the same time. Winter annual weeds generally prefer cooler temperatures and will dry down faster under hot conditions.

The winter annual lifecycle is in comparison to summer annual weeds, which emerge in the late spring to early summer, grow, flower, produces seed, and die all before the late fall. This would be the same lifecycle as corn.

You probably don't realize it, but you are most likely very well acquainted with a winter annual weed. Cheatgrass is ubiquitous around the western states. It becomes most noticeable when it turns red, then brown, and the seeds stick to everything from your socks to your dog's nose. Cheatgrass is most noticeable when it has become a physical problem, but at this point, there is no mechanical or chemical control for the plant: that plant is already dead but has viable seed ready to enter the soil. At this stage, the best control option is to prevent further addition to

the soil seed bank by pulling plants by hand, bagging them, and removing them from the property. This won't stop new plants from growing in the fall, but it will prevent any additional seeds to the soil and reduce the future population. Mowing and weed whacking will spread the viable seeds. Any foliar herbicide application will not kill the plant as the plant is already dead in the mid-summer. Mustards follow the same lifecycle as cheatgrass. Common mustard species include flixweed, field pennycress, blue mustard, and pepperweed. Hoary cress, another common mustard in CO, is a perennial weed, a List B noxious weed, and requires different management. Mustard species will often grow as a rosette in the fall, flat to the ground, before sending up a stalk with flowers in the spring. If a seedling emerges in the spring, the rosette stage may be skipped. Common mustards species in CO will have small white, yellow, or purple flowers. Control of mustard species will follow the same timeline as cheatgrass.

Winter annual weeds are most effectively controlled in the fall or the spring. Often these are the first plants to green up in the spring, making them more noticeable. Scouting for small rosettes or seedlings in the early spring will allow for the most control options. Herbicide application can kill the plant when still in the vegetative stage. Herbicides will have declining efficacy with the size of the weed or if the weed has already completed its lifecycle. Cheatgrass can be grazed when it is small, green, and palatable to animals. The goal winter annual weed control is to prevent the weeds from reaching maturity and producing seed.

Control of winter annual weeds is possible, but it will take patience and the proper timing to address them. If you have questions about plant identification or control methods, contact your local CSU Extension office for more information.



Do you have a question for extension but don't know who to ask? [Try Ask an Expert!](#)

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Check out our Dryland Pasture Assessment to see how your pasture measures up!

<https://sam.extension.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/GrazingGuide.pdf>

Do you have a question about managing your small acreage?

Contact CSU Extension /NRCS Small Acreage Coordinator(s):

Kara Harders
San Luis and Arkansas Valleys
970-219-9903
kara.harders@colostate.edu

Kat Caswell
Front Range Region
970-541-9834
kat.caswell@colostate.edu



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