

Goodbye Buttercups!

On July 7th and 8th, Legacy staff and volunteers gathered at Owl Ridge Conservation Easement, southwest of Water Valley, for our 3rd annual Buttercup Blitz.



Thanks to everyone's efforts two more large swaths of the invasive, noxious Tall Buttercup were removed from one of the grassy meadows. This was the first multi-day Blitz, and although we had hot and dry weather for picking our crew was not deterred by the heat!

Tall Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) has been a persistent problem around the Water Valley area for many years. Owl Ridge has about 5 acres of open field infested with it. Legacy and the landowners have been removing buttercup by hand, rather than mowing or using pesticides, in order to maintain the diverse population of native grasses & forbs which are competing for space in this grassy environment.

Tall Buttercup spreads by seed and by thick rhizomes which can split to create a cluster of daughter plants. Each plant produces 100-200 seeds, which become mature in early to mid-July. By removing the plants and seed heads before the seeds are mature, we hope the native species will have a chance to out-compete the buttercup for seasons to come.

So far, hand-picking has proved worthwhile, and we've seen some very promising results in the areas we've picked in the past couple of years.

This year, we tried the weed whacker on a couple extra-dense buttercup patches where native plants were less abundant. Initially, it seemed that weed whacking, followed by raking and bagging, was quite effective in quickly removing a dense patch, while leaving the native grass understory mostly intact.

One drawback to weed whacking is the dispersal of seed heads, which was inevitable despite our best efforts to rake up the stalks afterward. In the future, we'd like to bring out the weed whacker earlier in the season when the yellow buttercup flowers are visible and easy to find but the seeds are not yet mature.



When we were picking, the seeds were mostly developed but remained stuck to the plant's stalk and weren't ready to fall off. Avoid picking towards the end of July when the seeds usually fall off with an easy shake of the stock.

A big *Thank You* to the volunteers who helped us pick, as well as Home Hardware in Olds for donating bags for disposal of the plants. And thanks to George, a volunteer who brought us a load of gloves for weed-picking. These generous donations will help us in the future to remove more noxious weeds from Owl Ridge and anywhere else it may be needed!



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