

SALT CEDAR

Tamarix ramosissima, Tamarix chinensis, Tamarix parviflora

(Aka Tamarisk, Chinese Tamarisk, Smallflower Tamarisk)



Overview:

Saltcedars are deciduous, loosely branched shrubs or small trees and native to Asia. They were introduced in the 1800s and used as ornamentals, to establish wind breaks, and to stabilize soil in riparian areas. They reproduce by seed but can also sprout vegetatively from buried stem or branch pieces. Saltcedar produces massive quantities of tiny seeds which have a short viability period but can germinate quickly in a broad range of conditions. It develops a deep tap root (as deep as 5m) to access groundwater and can tolerate extended periods of drought once established. Saltcedar has replaced large tracts of native cottonwood/willow stands in the US and has lower wildlife value and greater water uptake than native tree stands.

It tolerates high levels of salinity and this salt accumulates among leaf scales during evapotranspiration. The resulting leaf litter increases salinity of the soil over time, making it unsuitable for native vegetation.

Invasion by saltcedar is linked to disturbance/removal of native vegetation and/or alteration of natural

flooding patterns by human activities such as dams (stabilization of water levels, increased sedimentation). Seedlings are poor competitors and intolerant of flood scouring. Saltcedar develops dense stands which accumulate sediment, increasing saltcedar habitat and altering stream channels and floodplains.

Several species of *Tamarisk*, including *T. ramosissima* (Saltcedar), *T. chinensis* (Chinese Tamarisk) and *T. parviflora* (Smallflower Tamarisk) were introduced to North America. Species identification is difficult because some of the species are very similar in appearance and hybridization is common.

Habitat:

Saltcedar grows in many soil types but prefers fine-textured soils. It tolerates a wide range of saline or alkaline soils, but is intolerant of shade. It mainly inhabits the margins of water courses such as rivers, streams, irrigation canals, lakeshores.

Identification:

Stems: A few to several stems per plant. Young stems are slender, smooth and reddish-brown – the bark on older stems is furrowed.

Leaves: Are bright green, diamond shaped, scale-like, alternate, overlapping - strongly resembles cedar foliage - and 0.5 to 3 mm long. Leaf edges are thin & dry and turn yellow-orange in autumn.

Flowers: Are small, pale pink to white, and borne in finger-like clusters which are 2 to 5 cm long. Seed capsules are 3-4 mm long and the petals usually retained on the capsule. Seeds are less 0.5 mm long with a tuft of 2 mm hairs at one end.

Seeds: The seeds are oval, flattened, grey to ivory in color, and 2-3 mm long. Seeds have long, white bristles at the tip when young, which fall off at maturity.

Prevention:

Saltcedar is available for sale under the names Pink Cascade and Summer Glow through both catalog and some local nursery retailers. The tiny seeds are dispersed by wind and water. Because of their small size they are difficult to detect in soil, making contaminated soil another possible pathway for spread. Seedling infestations are easiest to control – established infestations will require significant funding and effort over multiple years.

Control:

Grazing: Cattle and goats will eat tamarisk but trampling from livestock in riparian areas would be detrimental. Goats would require herding to protect native species. Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.

Cultivation: Root plowing has been used in the desert U.S. on large, dense stands.

Mechanical: Cutting alone is ineffective, as saltcedar resprouts vigorously. The method most employed is herbicide applied to cut stumps with the best results from autumn applications. Hand pulling of new, young plants can be effective. Burning has been used in the U. S. and resprouts treated with herbicide.

Chemical: Currently no selective herbicides are registered for use on saltcedar. The use of herbicides in aquatic environments requires Saskatchewan-specific applicator certification and permits. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: The Tamarisk leaf beetle (*Diorhabda elongata*) is a defoliator which has been released in the U.S. since 2001 and is beginning to have a substantial impact.





Provincial Designation:
Prohibited

