

SWEMP FAQ's - Ipomoea species - Morningglory

Q- The Noxious Weed List says all *Ipomoea* species except *I. carnea*, *I. triloba*, and *I. arborescens* are noxious. I have seen *Ipomoea costellata* at Canyon de Chelly, but have a hard time believing that it is a noxious weed. I have also had a similar question about *Ipomoea coccinea*, another small-statured native species that occurs locally in Flagstaff, AZ. Could you share with us the rationale behind the inclusion of the *Ipomoea* on the state list?

A- Our proposed revision of the noxious weed rules R3-4-244 and R3-4-245 will be changed to designate only non-native *Ipomoea* species as noxious weeds. We also propose to reword the definition of a noxious weed such that the domain of the noxious weed program will be restricted to non-native plant species.

The following paragraphs are an excerpt from an article that I wrote last spring, and they address your question about why exotic morningglory species are prohibited.

Noxious Weeds For Sale

As each spring flower season approaches, weed dispersal can happen from businesses such as grocery, drug, pet or hardware stores. Even though most gardeners do not think of nurseries or gardening shops as sources of pest plants, Arizona Department of Agriculture inspectors find prohibited weeds in retail seed displays each year. Ornamental plant commerce has introduced many alien weeds that now infest North America because commercial plant growers frequently move plants from one continent to another. Often non-native species have no natural enemies in new environments, and if an exotic species is an aggressive colonizer, it may become weedy invaders in new habitats.

Arizona has dozens of plants that qualify as weeds. Some of our weeds are native to the state, but, many weeds were introduced from other countries. Occasionally, non-native plants are extremely dangerous pollutants to cropland, grazing land, water resources or native plant communities. Non-native plants included on Arizona's noxious weed list are regulated because of they are economically or ecologically detrimental. Non-native morning glory species (which are the only kind sold commercially) invade and persist in Arizona cotton fields; their growth is so abundant and competitive, that their vines entangle and cover cotton plants. In other words, morningglory infestations can become so dense that harvesting a cotton crop becomes extremely difficult. Obviously these situations become an economic disaster for the farmer. Therefore, sale and possession of morningglory species that originated in other parts of the world are prohibited in Arizona.

An exception will be made in the noxious weed regulations for perennial shrub and tree species of *Ipomoea* (*I. carnea* and *I. arborescens*) since they do not escape from cultivation like the annual, herbaceous vine species. (Dr.Ed Northam, Personal Communication February 2003)

