April 2022 Newsletter

MONTANA WEED CONTROL ASSOCIATION

WWW.MTWEED.ORG

Background Images by Joshua McTeer

2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Billings Convention Center January 31st - February 3rd

Image by Joshua McTeer

Moving into the year 2022, January and February provided plenty of opportunities for growth and learning within the Montana Weed Control Association (MWCA). The most notable of opportunities was the MWCA 65th Annual Conference in Billings, where folks were able to network with great vendors and speakers. MWCA hosted a fundraising booth with various books, cards, and stylish wild rags throughout the conference. Next to it, a table was set up to help familiarize MWCA members with the membership database Neon and to assist them with getting their accounts set up before leaving the conference.

Excellent presentations regarding proper herbicide use, spraying during periods of drought, high priority weeds, soil health, restoration, and other major topics were covered during the conference to better prepare everyone for the upcoming weed season. The speakers represented Montana State University, Federal and local government agencies, and nonprofits. Each was passionate about their particular areas of expertise and kept the audience engaged as they imparted their valuable information to those who were in attendance. Hands-on workshops were also held for diagnosing herbicide symptoms, enhancing biocontrols, and for making critical decisions to offer a more facilitated learning environment.

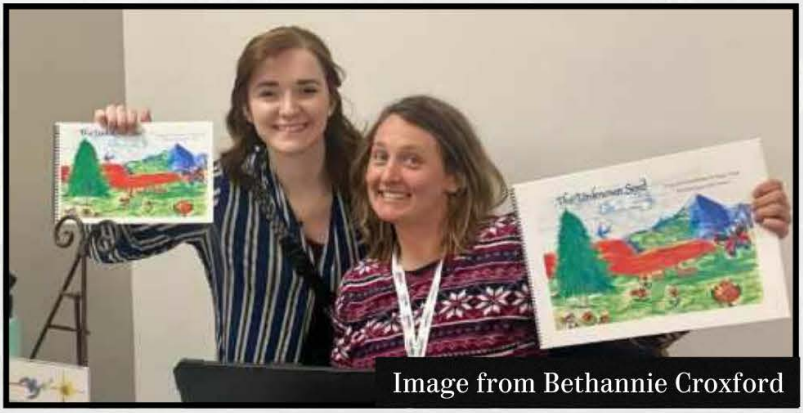


Image from Bethannie Croxford

In addition to the various presentations and workshops, the MWCA Board of Directors also saw new elected members step up to their positions on the board and they held a regular board meeting discussing MWCA matters.

An awards ceremony was held in honor of those MWCA members who over the years have committed a lot of time and energy to combat weeds in the state of Montana. The first of these was the Presidential Award bestowed upon Becky Kington by Dave Burch, followed by the Agency Weed Fighter of the Year and Weed Fighter of the Year awards presented by Kellieann Morris to brothers Chris Sillingham and Scott Sillingham respectively. The award for Outstanding Weed District of the Year was presented to Terry Turner on behalf of Hill County by Dave Burch, and the award for Outstanding CWMA of the Year was presented to Amber Burch of the Big Hole Basin CWMA by Jesse Scott. Lastly was the presentation of the Barb Mullin Award to Jed Fisher by Jim Ghekiere and Terry Turner which then led to the conclusion of the ceremony.

Image by Rory Lewis

Image by Rory Lewis

Image by Bethannie Croxford

Help planning, setting up, and running the conference was provided by the MWCA Executive Director, Board of Directors, and dedicated members. Additional help included the hotel staff, MWCA's Big Sky Watershed Corps member, and the students from the Broadview Future Farmers of America chapter.

Image by Bethannie Croxford

Image by Bethannie Croxford

Though COVID-19 made attendance difficult for some, the MWCA Annual Conference still had great participation! Most speakers and vendors made it and those that couldn't were available through Zoom calls for part of the event. All in all, the MWCA Annual Conference provided a space for in-person learning and networking that was long overdue!

Image by Joshua McTeer

EDUCATION SUMMIT

Metra Park 4H Building on March 29th

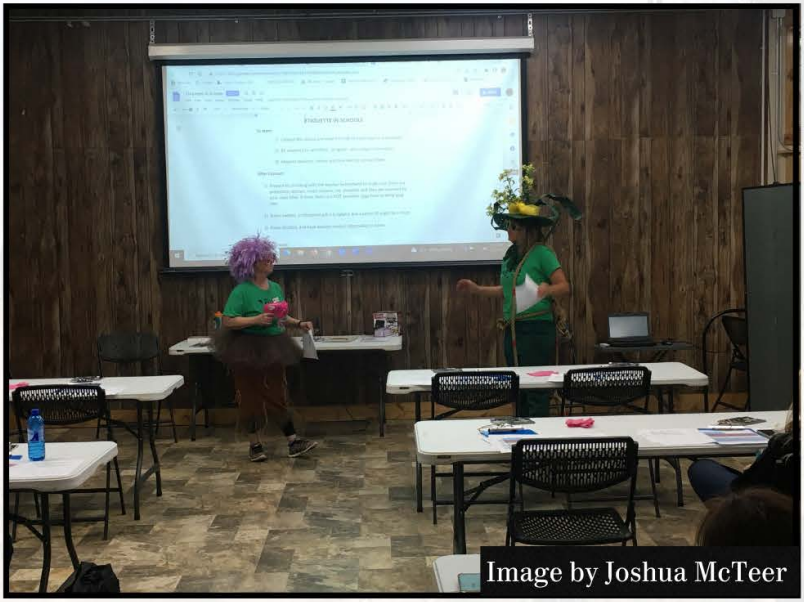
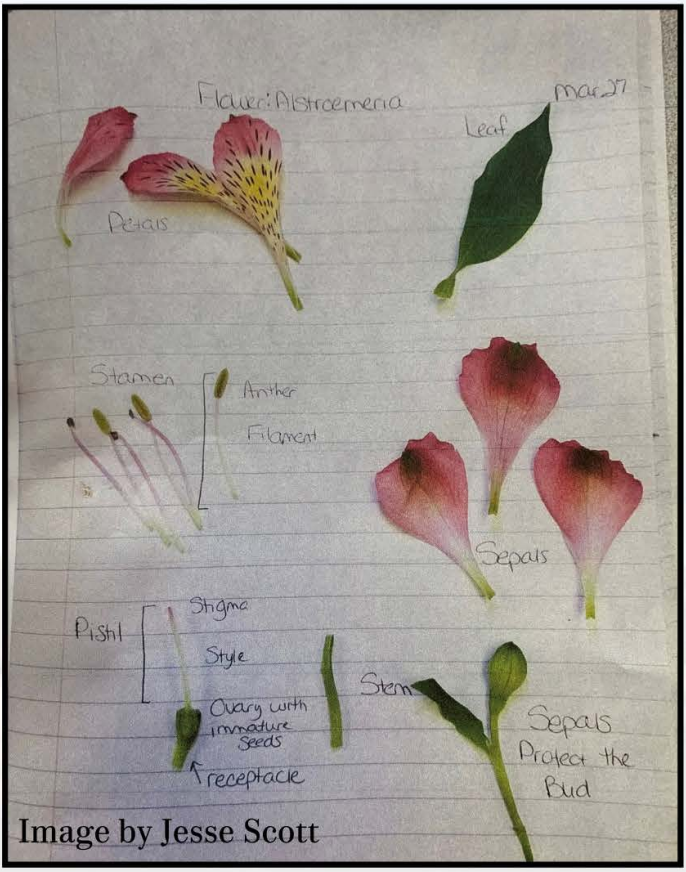


Image by Joshua McTeer

The Education Summit hosted by Megan Hoyer, Kelsey Miller, and Pam Schwend of the MWCA Southcentral area was an absolute blast! Megan and Pam who ran the show are two of the most energetic, passionate, and fun weed warriors out there, and they presented many creative ways to bestow noxious weed knowledge on people of all ages. Starting the day dressed as Nellie Knapweed and the Leafy Spurge Lady, Pam and Megan acted out scenes and sang songs about noxious weeds used to educate younger kids with a shorter attention span. They made it known that if you want to keep a child's attention, you need to be loud, colorful, and a bit goofy from time to time. This, of course, is not a secret to anybody who' s spent a significant amount of time around kids.



They then switched gears towards plant dissection! This is a fun activity aimed at getting older kids and adults thinking about the various parts of a plant's anatomy and teaching them what to look for when going out to identify weeds. After the plant's dissection, their various identifiable parts were taped to paper and fully labeled. This is a great way to get folks pumped about plant identification; activities like this help people to retain knowledge learned during hands-on activities longer.

Image by Jesse Scott

Moving on from there, a soil profile (seen in the picture below) was displayed by Nick Miller of Billings City Park, which was used to present one of the best ways to grow plants in city gardens with fewer noxious weeds. Mulch is not a weed's friend, so if the soil is laid out in mounds, with mulch filling the spaces in between, desirable plants can grow on their happy little islands without worrying about weeds. The weeds that do show up are easy to pull out of the mulch, as there is no soil in which to establish roots. This was a fun activity paired with a little tutorial in "designing city gardens" using wooden blocks that represent different flowers.

Image by Joshua McTeer

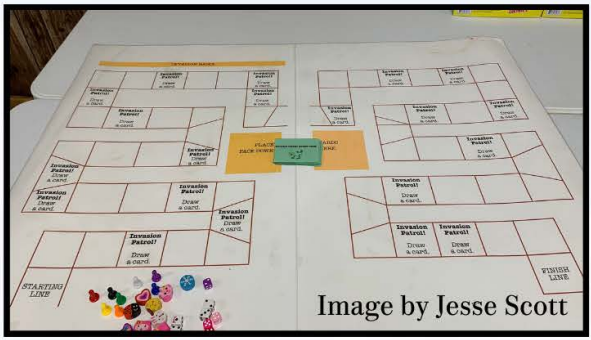


Image by Jesse Scott

Pam, Megan, and friends set up incredible games designed to inform kids and young adults about the unfair advantages that noxious weeds have against native plants. These games came in a multitude of forms, some of which resembled classic games such as Life, Twister, and musical chairs, while others were more original. A favorite game involved two teams picking plants off of a mannequin and quickly identifying them as either native plants or noxious weeds. The team that identified the most with speed and accuracy won the game.

Image by Jesse Scott

Image by Joshua McTeer

All things considered, this was a fun-filled day to teach noxious weed professionals of all backgrounds about the various ways to educate the public on the issues that noxious weeds can pose. It was also a way for everybody involved to have a bit of fun and learn a few things about weeds that may have been novel to them. Hopefully they continue doing this for larger audiences in the coming years, and that weed professionals continue to learn how to engage the public in the fight against noxious weeds!

Montana Weed Control Association
PO Box 2064, Havre, MT, 59501

Visit the MWCA website for more information on upcoming events and weed related material.