

Nuisance Grass/Weed Program



- **Nuisance Grass/Weed Program**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **History**
- **Program Process**
- **What Happens If You Do Not Cut Your Grass/Weeds?**
- **Tips On Lawn Care**
- **Other Property Related Questions**
- **City Codes on Weeds, Boulevards, Fencing and Landscaping**
- **Property Before & After Photos**
- **Noxious Weed Photos**
- **Supporting Documents**
- **Web Links**
- [Public Right-of-Way \(fences\)](#)
- [Wildland Fire Prevention Program](#)

Nuisance Grass/Weed Program

Vacant lots, yards, sidewalks and alleys overgrown with tall weeds are not only unsightly, but they can harbor rodents and reptiles and the most dangerous - become a fire hazard. The City of Great Falls has an annual "nuisance weed program" to help eliminate this problem. The program runs from May through October (depending on the weather). Each year approximately 2,500 letters are sent to property owners with weed violations.

Please be considerate of your neighbors and keep your property clear of weeds and debris. If you can help a friend or neighbor in need, please do so. If you are going to be out of town for an extended period of time make arrangements to have someone take care of your property. [Great Falls \(click here to connect to Street Name & Address Guide\)](#) is a beautiful City; please help us keep it looking GREAT!

If you do receive a violation notice and need more time to tend to the violation or there are circumstances you need to discuss, please call the Weed Investigator Debbie Kimball at (406) 771-1401. We can't work with you unless you contact us, do not ignore the violation notice. If you feel you have received a violation notice in error please

Nuisance Grass/Weed Program

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call and the situation can be discussed.

Please Note:

There are areas throughout the City of Great Falls that are County and/or State right-of-ways and lots. These areas will be maintained by the County and State not by the City of Great Falls. If you are concerned about an area that is not being maintained please call (406) 727-8637 or (406) 771-1401 and leave a message with a return phone number and the area will be checked.

The State of Montana Highway Department can be reached locally at (406) 454-5880. The following right-of-ways are areas maintained by the State of Montana Highway Department:

- All Bridges
- 1st & 2nd Avenue North
- 14th & 15th Streets
- 10th Avenue South
- 6th Street South West
- North West Bypass
- Central Avenue West
- River Drive
- Park Drive
- Vaughn Road
- 57th Street South
- 3rd Street North West to 10th Street North East
- Market Place and Exit "0"
- Fox Farm Intersection
- Country Club Boulevard Barrier Area
- Bootlegger Trail
- Old Havre Highway
- 25th Avenue North East from Old Havre Highway to the East

For areas outside the City of Great Falls the County Road Department can be reached locally at (406) 454-6920.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is a grass/weed violation?** Grass, weeds and any uncared for vegetation growing to a height in excess of eight inches on any property within the City limits.
- **How do I report a nuisance grass/weed violation?** A complaint of a nuisance weed violation can be reported by leaving a recorded message on the PAR-TNER Line (406) 727-8637, or by calling the Public Works Operations Office at (406) 771-1401. All information is kept confidential. The [Contact Us](#) form and the [Street Maintenance Notification Form](#) are available online as well.
- **Are dandelions considered a nuisance weed?** Dandelions, though not desired in our lawns, are not considered nuisance weeds under this ordinance unless they grow to a height in excess of eight inches.
- **Is spraying part of the ordinance?** The ordinance in place does not require the property be sprayed, only that it be cut. This includes City parks.
- **If I have an alley am I responsible for that area maintenance?** Yes, City Code 8.32.200 - Alley Maintenance states: All persons owning, occupying or being in control of property fronting on any alley of this City shall keep the portion of the alley between the centerline thereof and the property line of such property and fronting on such property, free from garbage, rubbish, weeds, or any other combustible material.
- **I notified the weed investigator on a property and nothing has happened yet?** The process takes time from investigating the violation, notifying the property owner and then the time allowed to correct the situation. There are other reasons the process can be delayed: bad weather, change of ownership, foreclosure etc. You can call or e-mail the weed investigator regarding a property and an update will be provided. Don't wait until a property is 3 feet tall before it is reported. The violation will only continue to get worse until the process is completed. The sooner the process is started the sooner it will be taken care of.

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- If the City will be cutting the property it is usually a 2-3 week process from the time the notice is sent out.
- **If a property is reported and cut but is once again in violation do I need to report it again?** Yes, each violation has its own case number. Once a property has been cut either by the property owner or the City that case will be closed and a new case number will need to be opened for each new violation.
 - **I have sprayed the weeds; do I still need to cut them?** Yes, once the spray has been applied let it work for 3-4 days and then cut the area. If you need more time please call the Weed Investigator Debbie Kimball at (406) 771-1401.
 - **What can I spray that won't hurt the trees and grass?** 2,4-D is the recommended spray. It can be purchased at local farm/ranch supply stores.
 - **The spray I am using does not seem to be working, what can I do?** The spray may be old or may have been frozen if it sat in the garage all winter. Weeds can also become immune to the same chemicals. Try some new spray or different chemicals and see if that helps. The [County Weed & Mosquito Superintendent](#) is also a good source for advice at (406) 454-6920.
 - **What are the main nuisance weeds reported in Great Falls?** The number one weed reported is the dandelion which is not considered a nuisance weed. However, some dandelions that have been in place for some time can grow taller than eight inches and can then be considered a nuisance weed. Other nuisance weeds seen around Great Falls are Kochia (which turns into a tumbleweed when dried out) and white and yellow sweet clover.
 - **What about Noxious Weeds? What are the main problems in Great Falls? What is the State Noxious Weed Law?** Montana's Noxious Weed Law, MCA 7-22-2116 states: It is unlawful for any person to permit any noxious weed to propagate or go to seed on the person's land, except that any person who adheres to the noxious weed management program of the person's weed management district or who has entered into and is in compliance with a noxious weed management agreement is considered to be in compliance with this section. MCA 7-22-2153 states: Failing to provide alternative weed control within the time specified is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be sentenced pursuant to 46-18-212 and assessed the costs of weed control provided by the board. A second or subsequent conviction is punishable by a fine of not less than \$500 or more than \$2,000, plus the costs of weed control provided by the board. Information on identification, control methods and management plans is available through the Cascade County Weed District. The Weed Investigator, if notified of noxious weeds on a property in the City limits, sends a violation notice and a copy of the [Noxious Weed Management Brochure \(PDF\)](#) with noxious weed information attached. The noxious weed is identified and noted that it should be pulled, or sprayed and then cut. The main noxious weeds in Great Falls are Thistle, Bindweed, Knapweed, Whitetop, Leafy Spurge and Curly Dock.
 - **Who do I notify on Noxious Weeds?** In the City limits contact the Weed Investigator at 406-771-1401. Outside the City limits or for questions regarding Noxious Weeds contact the [County Weed & Mosquito Superintendent](#) at (406) 454-6920.
 - **What about "Natural Landscaping, Native Plants and Grasses"?** You see many properties using Natural Landscaping, Native Plants and Grasses in yards, parkland etc. The City of Great Falls is looking into adding information to the current weed/grass ordinance. These areas are handled as a case by case basis, with the Weed Investigator working with the property owner to insure there are no nuisance/noxious weeds on the property, there is a clear path in the public right-of-way, there are no clear vision triangle issues, and that there is not a fire hazard.
 - **Leaf Removal? Leaf removal within the Boulevard District** takes place annually during the months of October and November. Homeowners within the Boulevard District are responsible for raking their leaves into the boulevard (please do not rake into the street) prior to their scheduled leaf pickup day. Schedule is subject to change due to inclement weather. If you have any questions please call [Park & Recreation - Forestry Division](#) at (406) 771-1265. A boulevard map and leaf pickup schedule will be listed in the attachments below during the months of October & November sweeping period, as well as on the Street Sweeping page. **For those residing outside the Boulevard District and are City Sanitation customers** you can discard your leaves on your regular garbage collection day. Bag or box these materials and put them 4' from the regular sanitation container for collection. Please do not place leaves in City garbage containers.

History

The City of Great Falls Nuisance Weed Program began on August 25, 1969, when a special committee recommended to the mayor and city council that a weed policeman be hired to enforce ordinance regulating the growth of nuisance weeds. The following year a specific ordinance was adopted. The weed ordinance is in the Great Falls Municipal Code Book, Chapter 8.44.

Program Process

The process begins with a complaint, an on-site inspection of reported violations followed by determining the legal ownership of the property involved. Once ownership of the property has been established, a letter of notification of nuisance weed violations is prepared. Owners are given 7 business days from the day the notice is posted or mailed. After the allotted time for compliance has expired, properties are once again inspected for violations. When possible a door hanger will be left at the property as a courtesy notification a day or two before the City will be back in the area to cut the property.

What happens if you do not cut your grass/weeds or uncared for vegetation?

Properties found not to be in compliance are noted and scheduled for cutting by City crews. A courtesy notice will be placed (where possible) at the property to notify the resident that the property has been placed on the cutting list within the next two days. Photographs are taken by the weed investigator to verify violations and once the work is completed, photographs are again taken. Owners whose properties are cut by City crews are billed at \$200/hour (1 hour minimum) for actual time spent correcting the violation. Any fines not paid to the City of Great Falls are subject to collection and the following year are filed as liens against that property on the [Cascade County Tax Records](#). This shows up on the Cascade County Tax Records as City of GF Specials.

Tips on lawn care

- Keep trimmed at least once every 2-3 weeks, but don't cut too short or that will stress out the grass and kill any new grass trying to grow. The best height is 2-2.5" in spring and fall, and 2.3-3" in the summer. During hot, dry spells keep the grass a little higher so less watering will be needed. It is best not to cut more than 1/3 of the total grass height at one time.
- Keep the grass watered, early morning is best. Dry, bare areas invite weeds.
- If possible spray your property yourself or have a professional spray for weeds. This does help maintain a healthy lawn but is not a requirement of the City ordinance.
- If you are going to be out of town for an extended period of time be sure to make arrangements to have someone care for your property for you.
- New developments need required landscaping within (1) year.

Other property related questions?

- Who do I contact if there is rubbish, junk vehicles and/or debris on properties in the City limits? Contact the [Community Development Code Enforcement](#) Tech Heather Rohlf at (406) 455-8574. Heather addresses complaints relative to rubbish, junk vehicles, property maintenance, graffiti, and other related issues.

City Codes on Weeds, Boulevards, Fencing and Landscaping

- [Official City Codes](#)

Nuisance Weeds 8.44
Boulevards 12.4.010 through 12.4.060
International Property Maintenance Code 15.5
Fences 17.20.7.040
Landscaping 17.44

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Supporting Documents



[Noxious Weed Brochure Revised August 2014](#) (184 KB) (PDF)



[Noxious Weed Information - Pictures - Maintenance](#) (150 KB) (PDF)



[Nuisance Grass/Weed Ordinance 8.44](#) (67 KB) (PDF)



[Neighborhood Guide to Official Code of the City of Great Falls](#) (6 MB) (PDF)



[Tips on Fighting Weeds in Montana](#) (5 MB) (PDF)



[Boulevard District Map](#) (306 KB) (PDF)

Web Links

[Montana Weeds](#)[Weed Awareness](#)[Montana Native Plants](#)[Cascade County Weed & Mosquito](#)[Montana Code Annotated](#)[My Neighbor In Need](#)

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