

Medium Risk / Impact in all regions of the Okanagan

Limited distribution with potential to spread further.

Black Locust

Robinia pseudoacacia

AKA: False Acacia, Post Locust, Yellow Locust, White Locust, Green Locust

DESCRIPTION

- Deciduous tree that grows up to 25 m
- Thick, deeply grooved, grey-brown bark
- Seedlings have long sharp spines which are typically absent in mature trees
- Leaves are large with paired leaflets
- Fragrant white flowers grow in drooping clusters
- Smooth dark red-brown seedpods

Black locust has been introduced across North America as an ornamental tree and to rehabilitate disturbed soil sites, such as mines. It mainly reproduces vegetatively through lateral roots forming dense, interconnected stands. Seedlings have high survivorship and fast growth rates, allowing them to rapidly dominate sites. Black locust also reproduces by seed with flowers blooming from April to June. Seedpods form in the fall and can persist through the winter, cracking open in the fall or spring. Seeds land and grow close to the parent tree but can be dispersed by wind, birds and other animals.



Black locust

HABITAT

Black locust is native to the southeastern United States. It is now found throughout British Columbia, including the Okanagan and Similkameen. Black locust prefers moist soils but can tolerate various soil conditions, including high acidity. It is intolerant of shade and grows best in open areas such as pastures, fields, forest edges, sloped hillsides, disturbed grasslands and roadsides.

LOOK-A-LIKE

Black locust may be confused with honey locust, an introduced ornamental tree. When in bloom, black locust can be distinguished by its white flower clusters which are larger than the yellow-green flower clusters of honey locust.



Honey locust

IMPACT AND RISKS

- Forms dense stands that out-compete native plants
- Insect-pollinated and may divert pollinators away from native plants
- Increases soil nitrogen, phosphorus and calcium, creating suitable growing conditions for other invasive plants
- Sharp spines on young trees are painful to touch
- Toxic to humans and horses



Black locust flowers and seedpods

PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

The most effective way to ensure that your lands do not become infested with black locust is by prevention. Here are some recommendations to prevent invasion on your property:

- Do not purchase, trade or grow black locust
- Maintain your crops and natural lands in a healthy, vigorous condition to ensure a competitive plant community; competitive perennial forbs, shrubs and trees utilize water and nutrients that would otherwise be readily available for black locust
- Regularly patrol your property for black locust and immediately control or remove infestations before seed set
- Cooperate with adjacent landowners and encourage them to prevent black locust spread
- Immediately re-vegetate disturbed, bare soils with ecologically suitable species that provide dense, early colonization to prevent invasive plant establishment
- Do not move contaminated soils to a new area

TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL

- Do not hand-pull seedlings; damage to interconnected roots causes stems to sprout
- Girdling can help to provide control; in the spring when trees are actively growing, manually cut away bark and cambial tissues around the trunk as close to the ground as possible using an axe
- Cut down large trees, ideally before seeds mature, and apply herbicides to the stump to prevent re-growth; re-cut sprouts and apply herbicide each growing season
- Deep stump grinding (at least 12" deep) is an effective control method. Ensure the entire stump and immediate root system are destroyed.
- Chipping is an effective means of disposal for limbs and trunks
- Chemical control is also an option; before applying herbicides, read the label for full use and precautionary instructions
- For further information on the selection and application of chemicals to protect your crop, contact AgriService BC at 1-888-221-7141 or email AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca
- There are currently no biological control agents (natural insect enemies) for black locust in BC

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