

# the Watershed Watch

Newsletter of the Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration Program

Spring 2015, Issue 12

## In This Issue

The scourge of Myrtle spurge  
page 3

“Poop fairy” signs give the real  
scoop on dog poop  
page 4

RainHarvest—Utah Rivers Council  
rain barrel purchase program  
page 4

## New & Noteworthy

Public Meeting: Great Salt  
Lake Integrated Water Resource  
Management Model, Jun 24, 6-8pm  
at Utah Dept. of Natural Resources  
1594 W. North Temple, Salt Lake City  
Details at <http://bit.ly/gsliwrm>

Wasatch Wildflower Festival at  
Brighton, Solitude, Alta, and  
Snowbird, Jul 24, 25, 26  
Hosted by Cottonwood  
Canyons Foundation, details at  
[cottonwoodcanyons.org](http://cottonwoodcanyons.org)

Lower Jordan River Canoe Cleanup  
two Saturdays, Sep 5 & 12  
Learn more at  
[jordanrivercommission.com/events/](http://jordanrivercommission.com/events/)

9<sup>th</sup> Annual Salt Lake County  
Watershed Symposium, Nov 18-19  
[watershed.slco.org](http://watershed.slco.org)

## New handbook targets stream health

Find out how to protect water quality and wildlife, preserve property values, and prevent flood losses

by Watershed Planning & Restoration  
Program staff

Clean, clear, free-flowing streams care something we all cherish in the Intermountain West, especially in highly urbanized areas such as Salt Lake County. Approximately 900 miles of streams, including the Jordan River, flow through the county, providing water resources, floodwater pathways, wildlife habitat, and numerous recreational opportunities.

Many of our daily activities can affect water quality, locally and far downstream. As a result, part of

the responsibility of protecting our streams lies with county residents. With the new *Stream Care Guide: A Handbook for Residents of Salt Lake County*, residents will learn how choices they make in their own backyards can help protect water quality and habitat, preserve property values, and prevent flood losses.

The overarching goal of the Stream Care Guide is to improve the health of streams and water quality in Salt Lake County. It was created to empower all county residents in their role in keeping our water safe and available

(continued on page 2)



### stream care guide

a handbook for residents of salt lake county



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[watershed.slco.org](http://watershed.slco.org)

New 57-page handbook available at [watershed.slco.org](http://watershed.slco.org)

STREAM CARE GUIDE  
*continued from cover*

through the use of best management practices in the landscape. This is true any time, but is especially relevant during this drought season.

The guide is organized into four sections that cover a wide range of topics. The opening section, “Streams 101,” introduces readers to watersheds and stream anatomy. “In Your Backyard” discusses best practices to promote stream health, such as picking up after pets, reducing lawn to make room for more native and waterwise plants, or rethinking an entire streamside landscape to restore the floodplain and native riparian vegetation. Whatever the scale, every bit of stream care helps. “Creek Closeups” explores the County’s 14 major creeks with descriptions, histories, facts, photos, maps, and elevation profiles. The final section, “For More Info,” offers a glossary, contact lists, permitting information, and other resources.

Most of the stream care practices discussed are relevant to *all* landscapes, but many are specific to streamside landscapes. If you do live along a stream then some, if not all, of your property is found within the **riparian zone**—the area of land along streams and lakes that connects the aquatic ecosystem to the drier uplands. Consequently, your landscape and homesite planning choices can have more significant and immediate effects on stream health and water quality. To target this streamside “market”, in mid-May the guide was mailed to over 4,100 households along streams in Salt Lake County.

The basics of stream care are straightforward, but they do require active participation! The Stream Care Guide is free and available from the Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration Program. Contact Lynn at (385) 468-6643, or [lberni@slco.org](mailto:lberni@slco.org). The guide is also available online at [watershed.slco.org](http://watershed.slco.org). □

## Save the Date

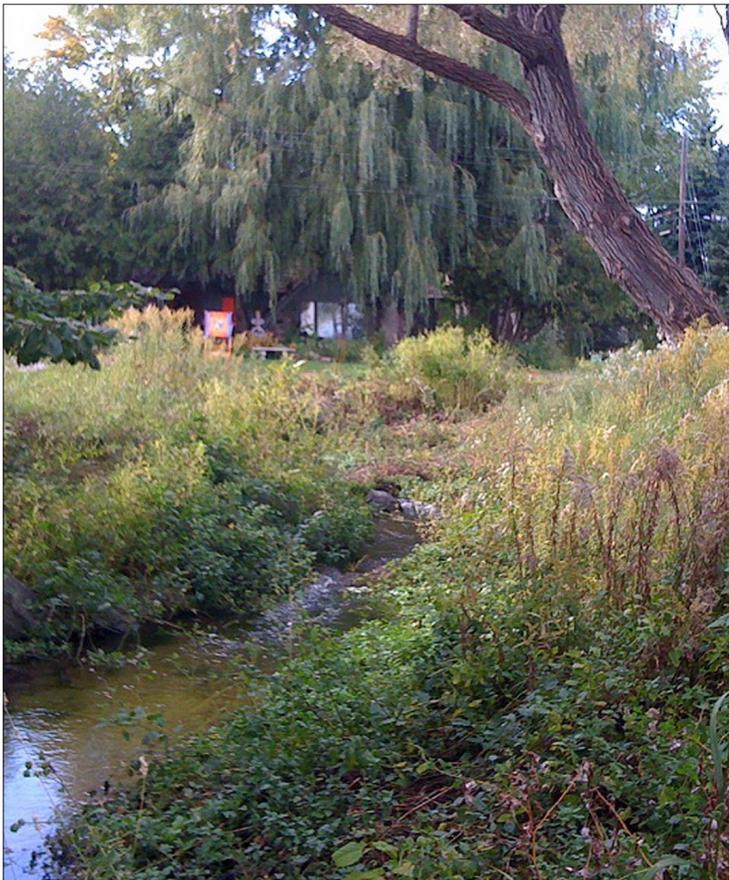
### 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium

### Nov 18-19, 2015

Free and open to everyone, the Watershed Symposium brings together water quality experts, policy makers, environmental advocates, industry, academics, students, and the public.

Speakers and sessions cover a broad range of topics—from general interest to technical—with local, regional, and national relevance.

Learn more at  
[watershed.slco.org](http://watershed.slco.org)



*Which do you prefer? Healthy native vegetation along streams protects water quality by filtering pollutants and stabilizing stream bank soils to prevent erosion. Vegetation also provides food and shelter for birds, insects and other wildlife; and beauty for us humans!*

# The scourge of Myrtle spurge

Escaped ornamental plant invading open spaces

by Sage Fitch, Salt Lake County Weed Control Program

In early spring, the eastern foothills of Salt Lake County are abloom with the escaped ornamental plant known as Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*). Popular in garden landscapes for its unique flowers and drought resistance, it quickly “jumped the fence” and began spreading into natural areas. Plant populations have now reached a critical level within our watershed. Its ability to displace native plants—due to an aggressive growth habit and prolific seed production—is just one of its nasty attributes. Toxic milky sap is another. All parts of the plant contain a caustic white latex that can cause contact dermatitis, ranging from a mild rash to severe blisters that require medical care.

While this noxious weed has been in Salt Lake County for some time, it is not yet widely spread throughout Utah public lands. Efforts are underway to limit its spread into our open spaces and natural lands through community education, stewardship, and a strategic approach to identifying spurge-free areas. Salt Lake County is working with public land managers to control infestations on public land, and encouraging private landowners to do their part to control this weed. County outreach efforts include “Purge Your Spurge” volunteer weed pulls, coordinated every spring by Salt Lake County Open Space.

## We Need Your Help

First things first, get to know Myrtle spurge and its identifying features. Then purge it from your landscape!

- **Flowers:** Inconspicuous flowers with showy yellow bracts.
- **Leaves:** Thick, succulent, blue-green, triangular shaped with white milky latex. Long trailing stems.
- **Flowering Time:** April–June



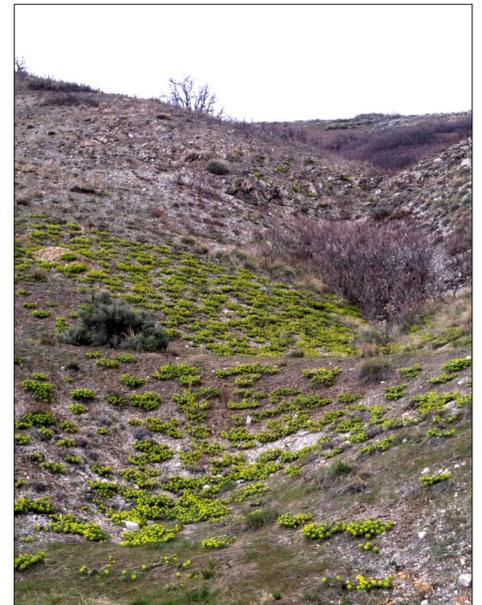
Look familiar? This common garden plant has a nasty habit of spreading where it's not wanted. As a result, Myrtle spurge has invaded many of Salt Lake County's open spaces. Showy yellow bracts (in spring) and thick blue-green leaves are very distinctive. Photo courtesy of Bonneville CWMA

Report outlying populations to the Salt Lake County Weed Program at [weeds.slco.org](http://weeds.slco.org). Record detailed location information, including a GPS point if possible, and an estimate of the size of the infestation.

## Control Methods

- For mature plants, hand pulling/digging in early spring before seed production is the most effective form of control for small infestations. Remove at least 4" of the root ball.
- Bag and dispose of all plant parts in the trash. Pulled plants with seed pods can still produce viable seed.
- For large infestations, or when digging is not possible, spray with an approved herbicide in spring and fall. Talk with your county weed supervisor for information related to your site conditions, and *always* follow herbicide label instructions.

For more information contact Sage Fitch, Salt Lake County Noxious Weed Supervisor at [sfitch@slco.org](mailto:sfitch@slco.org) or visit [weeds.slco.org](http://weeds.slco.org). □



Spurge hotspot on Bonneville Shoreline Trail

**WARNING!** All parts of the Myrtle spurge plant contain a toxic milky sap that can cause severe skin irritation, including blistering. Wear long sleeves, pants, gloves, and protective eye wear.

## Poop fairy signs give the real scoop on dog poop

Keep an eye out for new signs popping up around open spaces and natural areas in Salt Lake County. Inspired by similar signage in Park City's open space areas, Salt Lake County contacted the sign company, and voila! The new "poop fairy" signs were created.

The signs remind dog owners that pet waste doesn't biodegrade like wild animal waste. It sticks around for a long time, contains harmful bacteria, and pollutes streams and groundwater. And of course, no one likes seeing or smelling unscooped dog poop.

Salt Lake County Open Space hopes that folks will enjoy the signs, and the nudge reminding them to "do" the right thing!

Visit [www.slco.org/openspace](http://www.slco.org/openspace) to learn more about Salt Lake County Open Space programs.



## Let the rain barrel'ing begin

### RainHarvest program distributes over 1,000 rain barrels

by Watershed Planning & Restoration Program Staff

Pouring rain and chilly temps did not deter as hundreds of cars lined up to get their new rain barrels at the Utah Rivers Council's RainHarvest event. In fact, Saturday May 9 turned out to be one of the biggest and most successful rain barrel events *ever* in the United States.

Funded by Murray City and Salt Lake County, the RainHarvest program allowed residents to pre-order discounted rain barrels. The Rivers Council, along with an intrepid band

of soggy but enthusiastic volunteers, distributed over 1,000 50-gallon barrels! So, with every summer rain that fills a barrel (and it doesn't take much), there's the potential to save up to 50,000 gallons of water that would normally be diverted from our rivers. And, rain barrels installed on downspouts that currently drain to driveways and sidewalks will reduce the amount of polluted stormwater that flows to rivers and streams.

All in all, rain barrels are a very good thing. Visit [www.utahrivers.org](http://www.utahrivers.org) to learn more. □



On such a rainy day residents were eager to pickup their new rainbarrels purchased through the Utah Rivers Council RainHarvest program. Our own Marian Hubbard (a.k.a. "Gunshow") helped with the barrel loading! Photos courtesy of Utah Rivers Council

The views expressed in this periodical are those of the authors, not necessarily those of Salt Lake County, the Salt Lake County Mayor, the Flood Control Engineering Division, or any other entity.