

May is a busy month for weeds.

HEMLOCK is beginning to flower – cut any flowering plants to prevent seeding. Two priority areas to eradicate hemlock: Forest Meadow and Ring Pasture; also important are around the Pavilion and in the Red Barn Saddling Enclosure.

PURPLE STAR THISTLE – we are required by EBMUD to remove any plants on our pasture from beyond the grazing lease boundaries before June 1. We have not seen any yet this year, but in 2009 Alice pulled some near the Pond/Plateau water trough and on down the slope between the tanks and the Pond. Be vigilant. If you see them, pull them and remove from the premises. (*Centaurea calcitrapa*)

MILK THISTLE – we have a major infestation near the Forest Meadow water tank. Dig these plants starting from the Southeast corner of the path to the water trough, working toward the dense center of the patch. The horses will help us if we keep a pleasant, clear avenue to the water. Dig or chop any plants in bloom and hand carry to the center of the patch, away from the spring, so that we have a smaller and smaller area to manage.

This is the tail end of the season for controlling milk thistle by hand – try to prevent new patches from developing. Case in point is a few plants beside the fireroad in the Lower Pasture.

ITALIAN THISTLE is pretty much too far gone to control, so focus on the spots where you can totally remove a pioneer group in a half hour of work or less. This thistle waxes and wanes with the other plants, so not a priority for hand control... unless you can stop them from starting!