

Policy and Regulations that Govern Dandelion Control

Both The Province and The City provide the policy and regulation for weed control. The Province regulates weeds through the *Alberta Weed Control Act* (2010), whereas The City manages dandelions and weeds based on the *Integrated Pest Management Plan* (1998). The City also enforces weed control on private property through the *Community Standards Bylaw* (5M2004). Below is a review of how each document refers to the management of dandelions.

Alberta Weed Control Act (2010)

The *Alberta Weed Control Act* (the Act) regulates prohibited noxious and noxious weeds in Alberta. The definitions of prohibited noxious and noxious weeds are provided below.

Prohibited noxious weeds: means a plant designated in accordance with the regulations as a prohibited noxious weed and includes the plants seeds. The weed designation can be seen as regulatory support for an “Early Detection, Rapid Response” stage of invasive plant management. Plants in this category are either not currently found in Alberta or are found in few locations such that eradication could be possible. Under the *Weed Control Act* a person has a responsibility to destroy a prohibited noxious weed (Alberta Invasive Plan Identification Guide, 2013).

Noxious Weeds: means a plant designated in accordance with the regulations as a noxious weed and includes the plant’s seeds. This weed designation can be seen as regulatory support for a “containment” stage of invasive plant management. Plants listed in this category are considered too widely distributed to eradicate. A local authority may conduct control programs for these weeds if they feel they may have significant ecological or economic impact on lands within their municipality. A person shall control a noxious weed that is on land the person owns or occupies (Alberta Invasive Plan Identification Guide, 2013).

Under the definitions provided, dandelions do not meet the criteria for either noxious or prohibited noxious weeds. Dandelions have been long established in Alberta with no exhibited tendency to cause any significant ecological or economic impact. Therefore, there is no provincial requirement to control dandelions. A full list of the prohibited noxious and noxious weeds is found in the *Weed Control Regulations* of the *Alberta Weed Control Act* (Weed Control Regulation, 2010).

Integrated Pest Management Plan (1998)

The direction for weed management at The City of Calgary comes from the *Integrated Pest Management Plan*. The City takes an Integrated Pest Management approach to the management of all weeds (including dandelions). The definition of the integrated pest management approach is provided below.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): is an ecological approach to suppressing pest populations (i.e. weeds, insects, diseases, etc) in which all necessary techniques are consolidated in a unified program, so that pests are kept at acceptable levels in effective, economical, and environmentally sound methods. Since pest problems are often symptomatic of ecological imbalances, the goal is to attempt to plan and manage ecosystems to prevent organisms from becoming pests (Integrated Pest Management Plan, 1998).

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The *Integrated Pest Management Plan* prescribes three approaches to weed management: cultural, mechanical and chemical.

- Cultural: Routine irrigation, fertilizing and topdressing;
- Mechanical: Manual weeding, trimming and mowing; and
- Chemical: Herbicides or alternative/“green” pesticides.

Each control measure has associated costs and legislative requirements. Additionally, they are not mutually exclusive: to have healthy turf requires different approaches relevant to a given environmental context. The level of weeds in The City is also highly dependent on weather conditions and thus varies from year to year.

As a general practice on City land, chemical weed management techniques are not used for cosmetic purposes. The City only uses pesticides in the following circumstances (and most often in combination with other cultural or mechanical techniques):

- When noxious weeds are present (as legislated by the *Alberta Weed Control Act*);
- On sport fields where there is a public safety risk; and
- Where weed density threatens the turf or natural area asset.

Community Standards Bylaw (5M2004)

The current bylaw for grass and herbaceous plants on private property is found in the *Community Standards Bylaw*. The standards for herbaceous plants only reference a specific height requirement and do not reference any particular plant species: “No owner or occupier of a Premises shall allow grass or other Herbaceous Plants on the Premises to exceed a height or 15 centimetres (...)” (Community Standards Bylaw, 2004). Additionally, the standards do not apply to parks and natural areas under the control of Calgary Parks or areas under the direction and control of Calgary Roads, as City property is managed in accordance with the Integrated Pest Management Plan. Although The City has the authority to establish a bylaw for a specific nuisance pest, this is not in place for dandelions.

Sources:

Alberta Invasive Plant Identification Guide (2013)

Document accessed at <http://www.wheatlandcounty.ca/weedguide> on August 20, 2015.

Weed Control Act: Weed Control Regulation

Document accessed at

http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2010_019.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779748150 on August 21, 2015.

Integrated Pest Management Plan (1998)

Document accessed at <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Documents/Planning-and-Operations/Pest-Management/integrated-pest-management-plan.pdf> on August 20, 2015.