



PARKS AND
RECREATION

Adopt the Greenbelt News

A newsletter for Adopt a Greenbelt program participants

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Invasive Plant Spotlight: Common Mullein



While not on the Idaho Noxious Weed List, common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) can become troublesome in disturbed and unhealthy landscapes. Common mullein is native to Europe, and was intentionally brought to North America during colonial times due to its variety of medicinal uses. This weedy plant is a biennial, producing a basal rosette of wooly, gray-green, leaves during its first year and then putting out a single upright, typically unbranched, flowering stalk 5-10 feet tall during its second year of growth. Small yellow, 5-petaled flowers are densely grouped on the leafy spike. An individual plant can produce 100,000-240,000 seeds per plant, allowing for even just one plant to take over an area if conditions are right. Common mullein only reproduces via seed, making hand-pulling prior to flowering a great option for treatment. Though mullein is not native and may become a problem in disturbed landscapes, it's not all bad, providing a food source for birds such as this downy woodpecker seen eating from the seed stalk in the picture on the right.



Focus on Native Plants: Netleaf Hackberry

Netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*) is a native, deciduous tree that can tolerate a wide variety of conditions and can be seen growing within the riparian corridor as well as in the lower Boise foothills. This tree is relatively small, growing only 15-30 feet tall, with some individuals appearing shrub-like. This species has interesting twisted branches and a spreading canopy that gives it a unique scraggly appearance. Leaves are oval shaped, with a rough texture and prominent net-like veins. Newer growth is greenish with tiny hairs, while older bark looks grey and develops vertical corky ridges. Clusters of tiny, inconspicuous flowers bloom in spring, followed by red berry-like fruits enjoyed by birds and small mammals.



Celebrating Native Species: American Kestrel

The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) is the smallest and most colorful falcon in North America. Though small, this flashy raptor is a swift flier with astounding aerobatic abilities. Hunting by day, you may be able to spot this predator scanning for prey from high and then pouncing on its meal, either finishing it off there on the ground, or carrying larger prey back to a perch. American kestrels mostly eat insects and other invertebrates, as well as small rodents and birds. Like other falcons, kestrels don't build their own nests. Instead, they utilize found cavities for laying eggs such as old woodpecker holes, natural tree hollows, rock crevices, nooks in buildings, or human-constructed nesting boxes.

