

Tansy Games winner disposes of 7 tons of the noxious weed

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In the second annual Tansy Games, Volunteer Campaign Coordinator Janet Gilbert was hoping to top last year's total where teams removed the noxious weed from open county spaces.

Last year's 16 teams disposed of an impressive 9,960 pounds of the tansy ragwort which can be lethal to cattle, horses and other livestock.

However, last year's total didn't include the efforts of Denny Haddad. Due to a miscommunication at the Del Norte Transfer Station where the tansy ragwort is disposed, Haddad did not add his efforts to the total. But he has long taken it upon himself to remove the noxious weed from public spaces and didn't need the motivation of prize money.

"Tansy is a plague to the whole county," Haddad said.

Gilbert explained that Del Norte County actually has an ordinance making property owners responsible to manage the noxious weed's growth and to keep it 150 feet away from all property borders.

"The noxious weed is originally from Western Europe," Gilbert said. "With its pretty yellow flowers, most people don't know it is a toxic weed."

That's why she devised the Tansy Games to educate the public on how it an "attractive nuisance" that you don't want to keep.

"It's so ubiquitous, instead of the county spending all day writing up violations, we could write about its side effects to livestock," Gilbert said.

Animals can actually develop a taste for the tansy ragwort, which has an accumulative effect, Gilbert explained.

"It cannot process in their liver, causing liver toxicity. That's why it's also called staggerwort. Because they look drunk, eventually can't walk and finally collapse," she said.

The other problem with tansy ragwort is it has a wind-blown seed that can take it easily from one property to the next or into public or recreation lands, Gilbert added.

Now in his 70s, Haddad can look at parks today and remember back decades when they held no tansy wort.

So, he wasn't going to miss out contributing to its removal this year. The other 16 teams crushed last year's total, removing 14,920 pounds of the weed. Gilbert was pleasantly surprised by the first runner up's total of 3,000 pounds.

However, combined, they all barely beat Haddad. Haddad, by himself, hauled in 14,540 pounds — 7.72 tons — of tansy ragwort.

"I did it all over the county," he said. "There's some big ranches out Warhead Road, some that are 50 acres. Some I didn't even ask permission. I'd just fill up my truck. I don't how many times I filled it."

Not asking permission first nearly got him in trouble when Haddad started yanking out the tansy ragwort along Lake Earl Drive, right in front of the Pelican Bay State Prison.

"A highway patrol pulls up and asked, 'What are you doing?'" Haddad recalled.

With two sons who work within the prison, Haddad figured he didn't need to explain the obvious nor seek permission.

But he did go to the county just to make sure.

"They said you can do whatever you want," he said.

After each team turns in their tansy ragwort, Gilbert said it is hauled to and buried in a landfill in Central Oregon where it cannot recover in the warmer climate.

Led by Haddad, who received a \$500 grand prize from a pool of money contributed by outside donors, Gilbert was extremely pleased by the 2020 results.

“This cohort of team players did a fabulous job with almost three times as the first time. I’m thrilled they brought in so much.”

Tansy Games 2020 Winners

First place — Denny Haddad, 14,540 pounds

Second place — Steven McCulloch, 3,000 pounds

Third place — Team Crocket, 1,180 pounds

Fourth place — Anita Khamsomphou, 980 pounds

Fifth place — Team Phillips, 880 pounds

Sixth place — Team Doug, 780 pounds