



Idaho Nursery & Landscape Association  
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Director Celia Gould  
Idaho State Department of Agriculture  
2270 Old Penitentiary Road  
P.O. Box 790  
Boise, ID 83701-0790

Dear Director Gould,

It came to our attention that there is a House bill, No. 231, that is being introduced by the Health and Welfare Committee for the listing of Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) as an Idaho State Noxious Weed. I received a message from the secretary of the House Agricultural Affairs committee, Joan Majors, and she indicated that it was not on the agenda.

On Wednesday I received an email from Adam Schroeder, Section Manager, Invasive Species & Noxious Weeds, ISDA, that a petition to initiate negotiated rulemaking on this issue was received. I spoke with Adam yesterday and he indicated that this would most likely not be done until the completion of this legislature session.

It is my understanding that the only reason the animals who were killed by the ingestion of the yew foliage was due to the abnormally harsh winter conditions that were experienced this year that made food sources for wildlife scarce and drove the animals into areas where they would not typically be feeding. Over the last 10 days I have spoken to several of my members regarding the issue, along with parks and recreation personnel, and have put together a few key points.

- Yews have been growing in the wild for thousands of years. Japanese yews have been planted in the rural areas and parks of Idaho for decades. It is very rare that wildlife and livestock alike encounter these plants. It is a beautiful plant that grows well in our area and is not remotely invasive.
- In the 1990's yews were used in the synthesis of the cancer drug Taxol. Taxol is used for the treatment of breast, ovarian, lung, bladder, prostate, melanoma, esophageal, as well as other types of solid tumor cancers. It has also been used in Kaposi's sarcoma.
- What kind of a burden would the removal of these plants place on our County Noxious Weed programs and all cities and counties throughout Idaho if it was placed on the list? Idaho has one of the toughest weed laws in the nation and this should require public and industry input before the Japanese yew is even considered to be included on the list.

- In House bill 231 it states that there is no fiscal impact to the state. Not only would it include a financial burden on the local, county and state entities, but also potentially put them in the back-yard of many residences.
- There are many other yew Genera that are grown in Idaho and to choose just the *Taxus cuspidata* would not be very inclusive.
- There are a few other plants that are used regularly in the urban landscape that are poisonous. Will this open Pandora's box?
- Control measures could include educating the public on the awareness of these plants as toxic and forbidding the specification of the plants in landscape where livestock and wildlife come in contact with them. There could be labeling done for not only this but other toxic plants to make people aware of the responsibility they have to keep them away from areas that could result in death to animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns. Please feel free to call me anytime if I can be of any assistance.



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Cc:

Adam Schroeder, ISDA  
Rick Waitley, Food Producers of Idaho  
Jared Stuart, ISDA  
Jeffrey Pettingill, Bonneville County Weed Control  
Brian Jorgenson, Community Forestry Unit, Boise Parks and Recreation  
Joe Gruber, INLA President, Franz Witte Landscape  
Senator Lee Heider, District 24  
Senator Shawn Keough, District 1  
Representative Judy Boyle, District 9, Chair Agricultural Affairs Committee

**“Supporting Our Members To Advance Idaho’s Green Industry”**