

Green Stuff  
*By Hap Hansen*

Years ago, when we lived on small acreage, I discovered that some green things can turn out to be nasty. Some of the green things that changed were tumbleweeds.

Tumbleweeds will grow anywhere. I know they can grow profusely in the cracks of sidewalks and they would probably grow in the carpet of one's living room if they could just get a little water. They are deceiving too. When they're just beginning to grow, they have a soft, green texture and an interesting shape.

That's where their defense lies. They won't get pulled or sprayed when they're small because dummies like me think they may be some kind of new wildflower just beginning to emerge. By the time I had been suckered in, the tumbleweeds had become nasty. They have sharp thorns that will penetrate the best leather gloves with ease; a root system that seems to go down to bedrock; and a spine that will dull the sharpest blade.

I thought I had finally figured out a good way to solve the problem; just leave them alone until the late fall when they're no longer green and all dried up, then set them afire. Boy, howdy, did they burn fast! So fast that I couldn't keep up, even with the garden hose running full blast.

I did get rid of the tumbleweeds, but I also had to replace the corner of my garage that was blackened by a tumbling, flaming tumbleweed! I probably should have also replaced my neighbors fifteen-foot tall green spruce that went up like a fireball when a burning tumbleweed lodged in it after bouncing off my garage.

I thought about appealing the fine imposed by the City for burning trash on the wrong day; for closing the nearby grade school because of all the smoke; and for forcing members of the volunteer fire department to leave their Wednesday afternoon golf game. These people just didn't understand tumbleweeds!

After I went to the City Council and explained my predicament, I hoped they would suspend the fine and perhaps even give me an award for getting rid of weeds. They didn't! I agreed not to burn tumbleweeds anymore, but what does one do with a stiff, stickery, stubborn weed the size of a bushel basket? Two of them filled my garbage can to the brim and they absolutely refused to be compacted, acting like barbed springs with a mind of their own. I guessed I would just have to let them dry up and blow away.

But in the meantime, they were providing shade for the other things beginning to grow under them. You know what? They looked like they could be new wildflowers!