WEED SPOTLIGHT
RUSSIAN THISTLE
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“Tumble along, tumbling tumbleweed.....” or however that song goes. This is the type of weed we are discussing this edition.

Russian thistle is a member of the Goosefoot family and is mostly known as the “tumbleweed”. This plant grows quite well along road shoulders and unkempt vacant lots. It is a rounded bush, much branched annual, ranging in height from 8 inches to 3 1/2 feet tall. The stems are usually red or purple striped. This plant can fight back as it has spiny bracts located along its stems and leaf junctions. The seeds are easily spread when a mature plant breaks off at ground level and are scattered by the wind as “tumbleweeds”. It is a prolific producer and can produce up to 200,000 seeds per plant.

Since Russian thistle was accidentally introduced (from Russia) in the late 1800's, it has become one of the most common and troublesome weeds in the drier regions of North America. It is well adapted to cultivated dryland agriculture, but it is also found on disturbed wastelands (i.e., vacant lots, and road shoulders).

This plant is a late spring annual so a program of control could be Round-up on small plants or digging them out later in the summer and burning them in the burning barrel.