



Tamarisk (*Tamarix species*):

Tamarisk (*Tamarix species*), also known as salt cedar, is a tall tree with feathery green or blue-green foliage. In New Mexico, tamarisk is the arch-enemy invasive species, the equivalent of our buffelgrass. It is listed as a noxious weed there, as it is in Montana, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. In Arizona, however, removal of mature trees is controversial, in part because it has become a favored nesting site for the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Tamarisk may have been introduced in our area for erosion control. It has also been planted as an ornamental tree and for windbreaks. It propagates prolifically by seeds that frequently travel by wind or water. It also reproduces vegetatively; broken plant parts, even tiny leaf-scales, can take root and start new plants.

Tamarisk is a thirsty plant with a high evapotranspiration rate, taking lots of water and releasing it into the air. It competes with native plants and can displace riparian habitat. Other than mature trees serving as nesting sites for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, it contributes little food or other benefits to native animals.

In Saguaro National Park tamarisk is under control, but in other western states, it has caused serious damage. It grows fast and forms thick stands creating large areas of dense shade. This shade discourages native seedlings, from trees to grasses, decreasing the diversity of plants and animals in the ecosystem. It increases fire frequency, changes streambed hydrology, lowers water tables, and increases soil salinity.

Several other National Parks such as Grand Canyon, Canyonlands, and Lake Mead National Recreation Area have significant tamarisk infestations that threaten the natural resources and impact recreation.