

# Be On the Look Out! Invasive Plant at Academy Village!

## Help Us Stop Sahara Mustard!

Open Space and Trails Committee members have recently found several stands of Sahara mustard, an annual from the Mediterranean basin. This plant is invasive in the desert Southwest. It is controllable if we catch it before it becomes widespread.

Please Be On the Look Out for this plant, in your yard and around our Village! See **How to Identify Sahara Mustard** on the next page.

The plants begin to grow as early as December. By February/March they are blooming and producing seeds. Plants with ample water can be quite large and produce many flowers. However, plants only a couple of inches high can also bloom and produce seeds. By April/May the fruit has shattered and the seeds spread far and wide. Areas where Sahara mustard has been found should be monitored for several years and any Sahara mustard seedlings removed before they flower and produce seed.

With everyone's help we can reduce or eliminate Sahara mustard in our community.

## History and Threat

Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*) was introduced into southern California in the 1920's, probably in a shipment of live date palms. It has since spread to Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Nevada.

Sahara mustard is initially a weed of disturbed spaces and roadsides, perhaps hitching a ride on vehicles, but it can spread into natural areas.

Each Sahara mustard plant can produce about 9,000 seeds. The seeds germinate quickly in cool weather (61-90 degrees F) after rainfall. Large stands of Sahara mustard can remove enough water from the soil to threaten the survival of annuals and even surrounding shrubs.

## What You Can Do

1. Learn how to identify Sahara mustard - see next page for pictures and information.
2. If you find Sahara mustard on your property, note its location. If you find it in our open spaces, please alert a member of the Open Space and Trails Committee (OST).
3. In fall, winter and spring: watch for Sahara mustard, especially in and around areas it was seen the previous year.
  - If you find Sahara mustard and the plant is small (leaves only or flower stalk just starting to form), you can hoe it out and leave on the ground.
  - If it has started to flower, please pull up and discard. Cutting off just the top is not enough - the flower stalk will regrow.
  - If seed pods have formed, be especially careful not to break them open as you pull out the plant. These plants should be placed in a bag and then into the trash. DO NOT leave the plants on the ground. The seeds may already be mature enough to germinate the next time we have cool weather and rain.
4. In late spring, summer: If the seed pods have split open, it is too late to keep the seeds from spreading. Note the location of the plants or inform a member of OST. Monitor the area next year for these weeds.



**OST Committee Contacts** - Please use the "Contact Us" form on the What's Blooming at Academy Village website (<http://www.bloomingatacademyvillage.org/contact-us-2/>)

## How to Identify Sahara Mustard

**Size and form:** Up to 3 ft tall and wide with many branches (see picture on first page). Plants in dry areas are smaller, with few leaves.



**Leaves:** Leaves are found mostly at the base of the plant, up to 12" long but probably no more than 6" on plants in the Village. They are oblong and divided into several lobes. Look for the small dots, where prickly hairs are attached to the leaves. Leaves feel rough. Some native mustards (wildflowers) have leaves that are more highly lobed or have no lobes at all. They don't feel rough.



**Flowers:** Flowers have 4 pale yellow petals, looking like two Vs, one up, one down. X The picture below is much enlarged. Flowers are only about 1/4".



**Seed Pod:** The pod is long and slender, up to 2.5" long. Many plants in the mustard family have similar pods. Look for the elongated "beak" at the end of the pod to distinguish Sahara mustard from our native mustards.



← **These native plants are NOT Sahara mustard!**  
They differ in both leaf texture (neither are rough) and leaf shape.



For more information: Sahara Mustard Consortium:  
<http://saharamustard.ucanr.org/Consortium/Home.html>