Formerly xerothermic grassland were used as lower quality pastures for grazing sheep and goats, less often cows and horses. Today they are very rarely used for agricultural purposes.
Intensification of agriculture
- lack of grazing
- turned into intensively used pastures (fertilized and seeded with highly productive species)
- ploughed and turned into arable land
- afforestation

Abandonment of tradiciional management (pasturing)
- accumulation of dead organic matter
- eutrophication
- alien invasive species
- native expansive species
- natural secondary succession towards forest communities

Other
- building development
- transport infrastructure
- leaving garbage, wild trash dumps,
- trampling, picking, digging up valuable plants
Lack of grazing leads to the development of native expansive grasses and to *Rhamno-Prunetea* thickets (all photo MAJ)
In many areas of xerothermic grasslands in Poland, the expansive species is black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia* L.)

- it is a alien species to Polish flora,
- very expansive and vital,
- it is able to sprout from every piece of the smallest root or twig
It is estimated that well-preserved sites of xerothermic grassland habitats in western Poland have shrunk to only 30% of their former area since the mid-1970s.
Forms of xerothermic grasslands protection

• Nature reserves (in 2016):
  – 36 steppe reserves with total area 536 ha
  – 162 flora reserves with total area 4739 ha
    (including xerothermic flowery grasslands)

• Ecological areas

• Natura 2000 Areas – Areas of special habitat protection (SACs)
Summary

- Xerothermic grasslands being semi-natural habitats, require active protection, using different forms of sward use.
- Extensive grazing of livestock is essential in preserving valuable species of xerothermic grasslands.
- Stimulation of local community for grassland management, especially pasturing is necessary.
- Agri-environmental subsidies allow to preserve valuable habitats, including xerothermic grasslands.
- Educational activities are necessary to raise the ecological awareness of society.
Thank you for your attention