

Problem: Field Dodder (*Cuscuta campestris*)



Host Plants: Too numerous to mention

Description: Field dodder (*Cuscuta campestris*) is a unique parasitic annual plant that also is known as strangleweed or devil's hair. It is composed of golden yellow "threads" that twine over other plants and attach themselves with short, suction-cup-like suckers that arise from the bottom of the dodder stems. These suckers penetrate the stems of host plants to obtain nourishment. Flowers are small, whitish, and 1/4 inch in diameter. They are produced from April to October and will produce a seedpod that is two-celled and four-seeded.

Recommendations: Because dodder is an annual, it must reproduce from seed. Plants present during the growing will be killed by the first frost in the fall. Seed may sprout in the spring or lie dormant for a number of years. Germination takes place in the soil, but roots die as soon as the plant finds an acceptable host. After attachment, dodder lives completely off the host plant. A single dodder plant can spread by branching and attacking additional host plants.

Destroying the host plants can control dodder, but this may not be an acceptable solution for many people. Dodder cannot be destroyed by pulling it off the host plants because remaining stem pieces will continue to grow. Trifluralin (Preen Garden Weed Preventer, Miracle-Gro Garden Weed Preventer, Treflan, Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules Weed and Grass Stopper) is a preemergence herbicide that can be used for control if

applied before the dodder seed germinates. Also, glyphosate (Round-up, Kleen-up, Killzall, etc.) is effective on dodder. However, glyphosate is nonselective and will kill whatever it hits, including the host plants.

References:

1. [Dodder: Biology and Management](#), New Mexico State University, Guide A-615
2. [Dodder](#), University of Massachusetts Extension, Cranberry Experiment Station
3. [Dodder](#), University of California, UC ANR Publication 7496

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