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For Immediate Release

Pretty...But Really Obnoxious!

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You're driving down the road and can't help but notice a plant climbing a fence that has the prettiest white to pink funnel-shaped flowers. It appears to be the gardener's dream plant for a trellis, but be careful! While pretty, this plant, known as field bindweed, is a gardener's nightmare. Unfortunately, it can be found in gardens, lawns, fields and along roadways.



Field bindweed produces an almost delicate-looking vine with arrow- or shield-shaped leaves and white or pink trumpet-like flowers. But, the one-inch flowers are not what the plant is best known for. The vine's No. 1 talent is its ability to multiply and this is what makes it so difficult to control.



Each plant can produce up to 500 seeds that remain viable for 50 years. However, the bindweed's real strength is underground, where the vine's roots grow both vertically and laterally. In fact, the roots may extend up to 20 feet deep and 18 feet across. Any break in or bud on the lateral roots can produce another plant.

Field bindweed has been given many names including perennial morning glory, creeping jenny, bellbine, sheepbine and cornbind. A native to Eurasia, field bindweed was probably introduced to the U.S. in the

1700's by the early colonists of Virginia. By 1900, it had spread throughout the west and is now considered a noxious weed in forty-five states including Iowa.

Besides competing for nutrients and water, field bindweed can form tangled mats, run along the ground, twist-twine around other plants, plus climb up and over all kinds of things. So the question is, "How do you control field bindweed?"

Control of field bindweed isn't easy and it can't be accomplished with a single treatment or in a single season. Effective control involves prevention of seed production, reduction of stored carbohydrates by deep tillage of the root system, competition for light from other plants, and constant vigilance in removing top growth. Application of herbicides, which reduce bindweed growth and kill germinating seedlings, can also be part of an integrated pest management program.

Because field bindweed is considered a broadleaf plant and because most lawns are considered grass plants, there are a couple of herbicides (2, 4-D and dicamba) that can be applied to the lawn for use against field bindweed. This may involve two to three applications throughout each summer and for at least several years until control is achieved.

But, with broadleaf plants (which is most flower beds), there is no good alternative other than consistent hand pulling every three weeks throughout the growing season and doing this for a number of years. So maybe we need to rename this weed, but then again, my new name would definitely be censored!

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