

What is this invasive weed?



PHOTO COURTESY OF OSU EXTENSION SERVICES

Bindweed's extensive root system that stores carbohydrates and proteins helps bindweed spread vegetatively, re-sprouting repeatedly even if above-ground growth is removed by tilling or pulled up.

BONNIE COURTER
Master Gardener

Question: I have this weed that is so invasive, it literally takes over my garden. When I try and pull it up, it just keeps coming back stronger. What is it and how can I get it under control?

Answer: Your photo shows that you have the notorious field bindweed wreaking havoc in your yard. Bindweed, *Convolvulus arvensis* – also called “Morning Glory,” “Creeping Jenny,” and, appropriately, “Devil’s Guts” – is a perennial weed introduced from Europe and Asia, and is commonly listed among the world’s worst weeds!

Field bindweed, from the morning glory family, is often confused with wild buckwheat and the summer annual which is also called “Morning Glory” but which is not invasive.

Bindweed sports arrow-shaped leaves that grow opposite each other along a vine. Trumpet-shaped flowers, which are white or striped with pink and



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white, bloom throughout the growing season.

It reproduces by seed as well as vegetatively. Numerous lateral roots develop mostly in the top 2 feet of soil which form buds capable of developing into new shoots. A tap root can develop up to a depth of 20 feet with lateral roots penetrating the soil in all directions, sending out rhizomes. As they reach the soil surface, these rhizomes establish new crowns.

Now you see why this is such a nasty weed to try to manage!

Bindweed is common in cultivated fields and gardens, and in waste places such as along roadsides and disturbed areas. Its extensive root system that stores carbohydrates and proteins helps bindweed spread vegetatively, re-sprouting repeatedly even if



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Trumpet-shaped flowers, which are white or striped with pink and white, bloom throughout the growing season.

above-ground growth is removed by tilling or pulled up. When the vine comes in contact with a structure or another plant stem, it will twine and wrap itself around it, spreading over anything in its path.

So what to do? Obviously control is very difficult, but it can be managed with a lot of persistence and good timing.

Mowing is not an option as that will just spread the bindweed. If you want to avoid using herbicides, you will need to plan on pulling out or digging up plants for three to five years.

Remember that any roots left in the soil will regenerate in about two weeks, so prepare yourself to pull them up every three weeks – and

don't let it go to flower.

Use the deepest weeding tool you can such as a garden fork to get as much of the root as you can. If you stick with it throughout the summer, eventually the root system will be depleted, controlling the spread.

Successful control can be enhanced by the use of Glyphosate herbicides such as Roundup,

applied best when the bindweed is in flower and hasn't set seed yet. Repeated applications will be necessary, sequentially timed to allow regrowth and flowering before the next application.

Before applying any herbicide, always be aware of any nearby sensitive crops, and follow the directions on the label religiously.

Bindweed that is under moisture or heat stress develops smaller leaves with more surface wax, forming an effective barrier to absorption and translocation of the herbicides to the roots – thus the need for repeated applications.

Do you have a gardening or insect question?

Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.