

DODDER—Increasing in Connecticut

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Dodder, a plant that is parasitic on other plants, appears to be on the increase in Connecticut greenhouses. Years ago, dodder was seen perhaps only once a year. Now it is seen frequently throughout the state.

Dodder, *Cuscuta* sp., first becomes noticeable as a slender, threadlike, yellowish vine which intertwines throughout the host plant. The leaves are reduced to very small scales. Small white flowers are produced.

The plants start from seed in the soil. It forms a very fragmentary root system and sends up a yellowish shoot. When the shoot comes in contact with a favorable plant, it climbs it in an encircling manner. Once established on the host plant, it

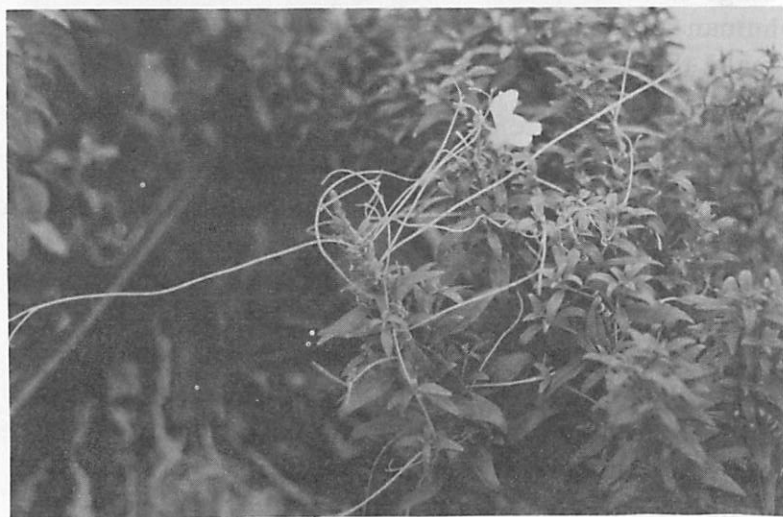


Figure 1. Dodder on snapdragon.

sends suckers (haustoria) into the stems and "drops" its roots. The plant then continues to grow and derive all its nutrients from its host.

Pieces of the established vine may be broken off, and when dropped on uninfected plants, they can establish themselves and continue to grow. The dodder vine can extend from one plant to another covering large areas. One or many plants can be ruined by this parasite.

Control

Plants infested with dodder should be removed from the greenhouse as soon as it appears. Do not place it in the compost pile, as the seeds remain viable for several years.

Steam is the only effective soil treatment that will control dodder. Methyl bromide, Vapam and Vorlex do not kill all the seeds.



Figure 2. Dodder on fuchsia.