

LOVE-VINE, STRANGLE-WEED, OR HELLBIND: THE COMMON NAMES FOR DODDER (CUSCUTA)

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Many of you have seen this parasitic plant, consisting of a tangled mass of tiny, orange, threadlike suckers and tendrils. Dodder produces no green foliage, but bears clusters of small, white flowers.

After dodder seed germinates, slender orange tendrils reach out until they come in contact with some neighboring host plant. Then they entwine themselves about the stem. Since dodder is a true parasite, the tiny sucker-like stems pierce the host stem deriving all their nourishment and water from it, losing complete contact with the soil.

Method of Control

It is useless to attempt to disentangle the dodder from the host plant, as new growth will occur if the smallest piece is left attached. The only sure measure of control is to root up the entire host plant or portion being attacked and burn it immediately. No chemical herbicide can safely be used which will not injure or kill the host plant. Ammonium sulfate has been reported to kill dodder on English ivy (CT. Ghse Newsletter #107, 9/81) but this treatment will injure most plants. Thus the best method of control is prevention. Select soil from a dodder-free area if possible. If you do not know the soil source, properly treat the soil if any dodder might be present.

Like any seed, dodder requires moisture to crack the seed coat and start the germination process. Therefore, it is essential that the soil pile be thoroughly and uniformly moistened to assure complete germination of dodder and other weed seeds. Normally, this moistening and germinating process takes several weeks. During this time it is important to turn the pile several times.

After weed seed germination, treat pile with heat or chemicals.

Steam - 180^oF for 1/2 hour.
Aerated steam - 140^oF for 1/2 hour.
Vapam - 1 qt/100 sq. ft., aerate for 2-3 weeks before planting; 3-4 weeks if soil is cold or excessively wet.

Methyl bromide - 1-2 lbs/cu. yd., aerate 3-7 days (Dowfume MC-2) before using.

Note: When using either of the above fumigants, follow all label directions and precautions.

References

- Bush-Brown, L. and J. 1955. America's Garden Book. p. 815.
- Bing, A. and et al. 1981. Cornell recommendations for commercial floriculture crops, Part II: Pest control-diseases, insects, and weeds.
- Schroeder, D. 1980. Controlling diseases on greenhouse ornamentals. CT Greenhouse Newsletter No. 100. July. p 1-15.

ERRATUM

You may have noticed! The December issue, #124 was labelled "October," the same as issue #123.

Don't worry. Our computer will not correct the error but will recognize #124 as belonging in December.