

WEED CONTROL: FIELD BINDWEED

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Field bindweed, also known as perennial morning-glory (*Convolvulus arvensis*), is an herbaceous noxious weed with a vining habit, heart-shaped leaves and white-pink blooms. This species flowers from spring through fall. Drought-tolerant and capable of both sexual and vegetative reproduction, this weed forms dense mats and out-competes native vegetation. Its extensive fleshy root system expands both horizontally and deep into the soil profile (up to 20'). As a Class C noxious weed in the state of Washington, control regulations are determined on a county-by-county basis.

Hand-pulling alone is ineffective for controlling an established, large population of field bindweed. The root system fragments easily and segments that remain in contact with the soil can produce new individuals. With enough persistence, hand-pulling can starve the root system of carbohydrates and significantly reduce the population. However, the roots build up large food reserves over time and once established, can survive without aboveground growth for two or more years. Extensive disturbance to the root system can in fact encourage belowground growth, as well. Monitoring for resprouts should continue for several years following control efforts. Hand pulling new seedlings (prior to the formation of perennial buds when individuals are three to four weeks old) is usually effective if care is taken to remove as much of the root system as possible. Always remove flowering portions of plants before seed set. Field bindweed seed banks can be viable for up to 20 years.

If the population is small and localized, smothering is a good option for control. Cover the entire population with black plastic or landscape fabric, being careful to overlap individual sections. Allow no light to reach the individual plants for at least three years. Plastic will crack and need to be replaced but is more effective than cardboard and mulch. Field bindweed can grow between layers of corrugated cardboard to access new areas and will grow through even thick layers of mulch. Following removal of the barrier, manually pull any field bindweed rhizomes that remain on the surface, mulch, revegetate with competitive species and monitor frequently for resprouts.

Roundup™ (glyphosate) can be applied while the plant is relatively young and actively growing. This method is best used to treat resprouts following another method of control. Apply the herbicide to leaf surfaces on a dry day. Herbicides containing triclopyr can be more successful due to affecting all portions of aboveground growth as well as the root system, and can be applied under the same conditions as glyphosate. Apply to both the leaves and the stem tissue. To ensure maximum effectiveness following herbicide treatment, do not remove the vegetation until each plant has completely died back.