



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 715-7470 www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds

HERB ROBERT

Geranium robertianum

THREAT: Herb Robert, a native of Eurasia and North Africa, was introduced either as a garden ornamental or a medicinal plant, and has been present in Washington since at least 1911. It has escaped cultivation and is now widespread in some areas of western Washington, including Whatcom County. Herb Robert invades undisturbed forest understory, outcompeting native plants and, in some cases, becoming the only ground cover plant. It also invades roadsides, gardens, and other habitats ranging from shady forests to dry, rocky outcrops. It grows from sea level to around 4000 feet. Herb Robert spreads by seeding prolifically, with the seeds being ejected from the plant, to a distance of 15 to 20 feet. The seeds are attached to a sticky thread, which can attach to passing animals or people, allowing for wider dispersal.



DESCRIPTION: Herb Robert is a low growing geranium, either sprawling along the ground or growing upright to a height of 10 inches. It can grow as a winter or spring annual, a biennial or a perennial. The stems are often dark red and are covered with white, glandular hairs. The plants have a somewhat sticky or oily feel and the leaves give off a pungent odor when crushed, leading to the alternate common name of "Stinky Bob". The light green leaves grow at nodes on the stems, and are highly dissected with long stems. The flowers have five petals and are about ½ inch in diameter. Flowers range in color from white to magenta, although bright pink is most common, and petals often have lengthwise stripes of a different shade. Herb Robert flowers from early spring to late fall. Each flower produces 5 seeds, which are borne in a conspicuous, long-beaked capsule, and the drying of the capsule causes the seeds to be ejected. The foliage turns bright red in the fall. The fern-like foliage of herb Robert is sometimes confused with bleeding heart. Herb Robert has nodes on the stem at which the leaves and flowers emerge. Bleeding heart has smooth, hairless stems with no nodes. Once flowers appear, the species can easily be identified as bleeding heart has distinctive heart-shaped flowers.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Herb Robert can be controlled using mechanical or chemical methods. Due to its shallow root structure, this plant is easily pulled. For site-specific chemical recommendations, contact the weed control board.