

Velvetleaf

Abutilon theophrasti

Mallow Family

Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Identification Tips

- Summer annual that grows 3 to 8 feet tall
- The entire plant is covered with short, soft hairs giving it a velvety feel
- Large, heart-shaped leaves grow from multiple branches
- Yellow to yellow-orange flowers with five petals form on the upper branches
- Each flower includes many stamens which fuse to form a tube
- Seed capsules are circular cluster of 12-15 seedpods, 1/2 to 1 inch long

Biology

- Forms slender taproot with many smaller branches
- Spreads by seed and is self-pollinating
- Flowers from July through September
- One plant can produce up to 17,000 seeds
- Seeds remain viable for 50 to 60 years
- Vigorous seedlings emerge at variable times
- Grows rapidly to maturity with new flowers appearing every two days

Impacts

- Damages crops such as soy bean, corn, asparagus, and raspberry
- Contains chemicals that inhibit germination of some crop seeds
- Outcompetes desirable plants for water and soil nutrients
- Hosts insects and disease organisms that harm crops

Distribution

- Has limited distribution in King County
- Found in fields, gardens and farmlands

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **206-477-9333**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds



Velvetleaf, which can grow up to 8 feet tall, is completely covered in soft hairs, giving it a velvety feel. But don't let its soft touch fool you, this weed causes millions of dollars in crop production losses and is a Class A Noxious Weed in Washington State.





Prevention is within your grasp: hand pull plants before they set seed. One plant is capable of producing 700-17,000 seeds.

What You Can Do

Since distribution of this noxious weed is limited to a relatively small area in King County, eradication is possible. The key is preventing its spread and removing plants from all known sites. Help by familiarizing yourself with this weed and the habitat where it grows. Monitor sites regularly and whenever possible remove plants prior to seed set. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Program if you see velvetleaf on public lands, neighboring properties, or on your property so we can help prevent further spread of this plant. Often where there is one plant, more are nearby.

Control Methods

Most control methods need to be applied over a number of years to be successful. Choose one or a combination of these. Preventing seed introduction is extremely important. Clean all equipment used in infested fields and take precautions to prevent movement of seeds by livestock. Seeds are very long-lived, so expect to revisit infested areas every year to search for new plants. Because velvetleaf is a summer annual, July and August will be the best months to find new populations. Once you know where to look, seedlings can be found throughout the growing season.

Manual: Destroy plants before they bloom by digging out or pulling up. Small populations and young plants are easy to control by hand pulling, before flower production.

Mechanical: Mowing is effective if done while the plants are still small. Set mower to lowest setting. Plowing/tilling is not recommended as it promotes seed germination.

Cultural: Crop rotation helps prevent favorable growing conditions for velvetleaf. Nutrient loading, however, is not recommended as velvetleaf is opportunistic and will use additional nutrients to extend its flowering period and seed production.

Chemical: Follow labels exactly as written and only use herbicides appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides with the active ingredient 2, 4-D are effective and work well in pasture areas as it will not harm grasses. Products with glyphosate (such as Roundup) will work but do not apply over grass because it is non-selective. Velvetleaf leaves droop toward the stem in the late afternoon so morning or mid-day applications are generally more effective. Apply herbicide when plants are less than 4 inches tall for best results.



Velvetleaf is most problematic in crops. This weed can grow and produce seeds under the shade of a crop canopy, making detection difficult.