YAKIMA COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED BOARD

1213 S 18TH STREET
YAKIMA, WASHINGTON 98901

October 14, 2025

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board
PO Box 42560
Olympia WA 98504-2560

Dear Members of The Board,

Yakima County Noxious Weed Board requests an emergency Class A listing for ***Orobanche cumana***, a known pest to sunflowers and tomatoes. Known to cause massive crop losses within one or two seasons and to persist in the soil more than 50 years once established. It is highly invasive, producing over 700,000 (0.15-0.5mm x 0.1-0.3mm) dust-like seeds per flowering stalk that are moved with wind, water, animals, and disturbance

This pest was found for the first time in North America in Yakima County.
USDA and WSDA have positively identified it through lab testing and require quarantine and eradication measures to be taken.

Yakima County Noxious Weed Board Staff and WSDA staff have surveyed the property and are in process of treating the only known location to date. We are in the process of surveying surrounding properties where sunflowers may be growing.

An emergency listing of this pest will ensure proper control measures continue.
Sunflower broomrape ***Orobanche cumana*** is a highly invasive, parasitic weed of the sunflower, ***Asteraceae*** family. Reports from Isreal and China include ***O.cumana*** parasitizing tomatoes, ***Solanaceae*** family. It is unable to photosynthesize and relies entirely on the host plant. Sunflower broomrape causes significant declines in the health and productivity of host, devastating sunflower and tomato production. The plants produce millions of seeds which remain viable in the soil for decades.

WSDA Media release: https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAAGR/bulletins/3f53d76
WSDA Statement:
Some key points for our response to date:
- A delimiting survey has been implemented; early results suggest no additional plants beyond the initial detection. Door knocking and mailers to inform area residents.
- The property owner and future property owner have granted permission for eradication activities,
- With the time we have left in 2025 we plan to:
- *Remove and destroy vegetation on-site in the infested area*
- *Conduct a controlled burn*
- *Cover the area with woodchips and plastic sheeting*
- *Continue survey*
- *Provide outreach and education to the local area and state*

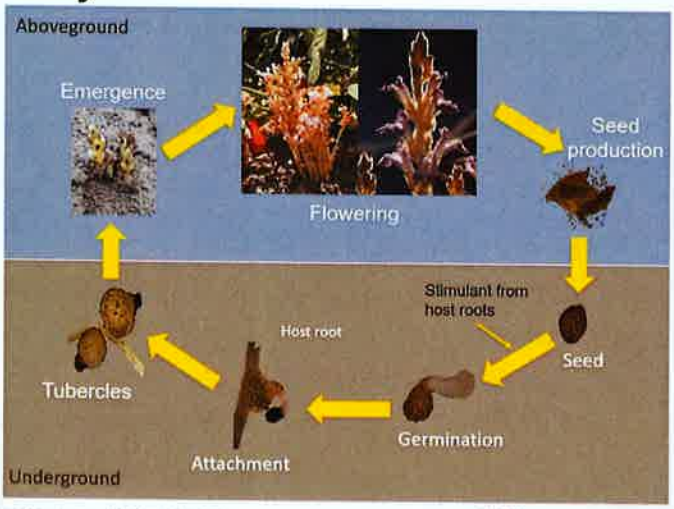
- *With the USDA, investigate the seed source that was potentially contaminated and other places that might have received seed from that lot*
- *Continue the use of unified messaging through talking points and develop a communication plan*
- *Complete emergency rulemaking to quarantine the pest*
- *Work to list **Orobanche cumana** as a class "A" noxious weed*

Photos taken in Yakima County.

Tubercles pre-emergent attached to root of sunflower plant

Orobanche Seeds:

Lifecycle



Produces seed within 1-2 weeks of emerging.

Primary host

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*): This is the main crop affected by ***O. cumana***. As a holoparasitic plant, it lacks chlorophyll and attaches to the roots of the sunflower to steal water and nutrients.

Secondary hosts

While primarily a sunflower pest, regional studies have shown that ***O. cumana*** can also affect tomatoes *Solanum lycopersicum* as reported in Isreal and China

Wild hosts

In the wild, ***O. cumana*** is known to parasitize several species in the daisy family (Asteraceae), especially species of *Artemisia*. This connection to wild relatives can lead to the evolution of new, more virulent strains that threaten resistant crop varieties.

Geographic impact

The pest poses a significant threat to sunflower and tomato production in major growing regions across

Europe and Asia. Its presence has been confirmed in countries such as:
Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, China, Russia

Article in Pest Lense:
First detection of sunflower broomrape, Orobanche cumana (Lamiales: Orobanchaceae), in North America
Country: *United States*
Source: *Washington State Department of Agriculture*
Event: *Detection*

Recently, the parasitic plant sunflower broomrape, Orobanche cumana (Lamiales: Orobanchaceae), was detected in Washington. This is the first detection of O. cumana in North America. Phytosanitary measures have been implemented.

Orobanche cumana parasitizes many plants, including Helianthus annuus (sunflower) and Solanum lycopersicum (tomato), although it cannot germinate in the rhizosphere of S. lycopersicum. Orobanche cumana has been reported from Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Bolivia and parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Orobanche cumana produces tens of thousands of microscopic, long-lived seeds and is difficult to eradicate once established. Orobanche cumana depletes host nutrients, hinders growth and development, and reduces yields up to 50 percent.

References:

1. *WSDA. 2025. WSDA seeks help from sunflower growers after first North American detection of sunflower broomrape confirmed in Yakima. Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) news release. October 1, 2025. Last accessed October 9, 2025, from https://agr.wa.gov/about-wsda/news-and-media-relations/news-releases?article=44833.*

In conclusion, for reasons shown, we ask to have an emergency class A listing for ***Orobanche cumana***.

Please contact our office with questions or comments regarding this request.

Yakima County Noxious Weed Board (509) 574-2180
1213 S. 18th St.
Yakima WA 98901

Sincerely,
Yakima County Noxious Weed Board

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