

Bluestem Breezes
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Bindweed Control

The sound of the word “bindweed” sends chills up my spine. Fortunately, there are means for homeowners to control bindweed. Unfortunately, the word “persistence” is a must.

You may see this nuisance weed referred to as “field bindweed” or simply “bindweed”. Not to worry, it’s all the same problematic plant.

This week, I’m sharing K-State Specialist Ward Upham’s suggestions for controlling bindweed in your yard, flower beds, and vegetable gardens. Regardless of the method you choose, early identification and continued efforts are essential for control. And, keep an eye out every year (even after you think it’s eliminated)!

Home Vegetable Gardens: Weed control requires taking the treated portion of the garden out of production for a time.

Solarization - Solarization uses the energy from the sun to produce heat that pasteurizes the soil. Follow these steps to solarize a garden area:

1. Select the hottest time of year to solarize, usually mid-June to mid-August in Kansas.
2. Work the soil deeply, and smooth the surface so the clear plastic will make uniform contact with the soil.
3. Water well. Moisture encourages seed to germinate and existing bindweed to grow so plants can be killed by the heat. The water also helps conduct the heat deeper into the soil.
4. Spread clear polyethylene film over the area. Seal the edges and seams with soil to prevent air from circulating under the plastic. One mil film is most effective at creating heat, but is likely to be torn apart by Kansas winds. Film that is 4 mil thick is more likely to last.
5. Leave the plastic in place for 4 to 6 weeks. The longer time is more effective.
6. Remove the plastic after 6 weeks. If you leave it in place longer, it may become brittle from exposure to ultraviolet radiation and be difficult to remove. You can plant the next day.

Glyphosate - Glyphosate is sold under a wide variety of names, the most common being Roundup. Take the garden out of production when treating.

1. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that will kill whatever it hits but is inactivated when it contacts the soil.

2. Glyphosate is most effective when applied to bindweed that is at or beyond full bloom. You can treat earlier but don't skip the late summer to fall application.

3. Do not apply to bindweed that is under moisture stress or not growing well.

Turf: Selective herbicides are available. An herbicide with the trade name of Drive (quinclorac) is available from Monterey Lawn and Garden (www.montereylawnngarden.com). There are also homeowner combination herbicides that contain Drive such as Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max + Crabgrass Control and Bayer All-in-One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer.

Note that lawns treated with Drive should not use clippings in compost or as mulch as Drive is very stable on grass clippings. We recommend clippings be returned to the lawn anyway but if they are bagged, they should be discarded. Do not apply products with Drive over exposed roots of trees and ornamentals. It would be best to avoid spraying beneath the canopy of any trees to avoid possible damage. If there are plans to convert a section of lawn to a vegetable garden, do not use Drive on that area. Eggplants can be damaged if planted within 12 months of areas treated with Drive, and tomatoes can be damaged if planted within 24 months.

Shrub Beds: Use a spray of glyphosate between plants. Use a shield if spraying near plants to keep spray from contacting green plant material. Remember, glyphosate will hurt your shrubs if it contacts green tissue.

It is possible to control field bindweed by pulling, but you must be extremely persistent. There is a study from the 1940s that found that bindweed produces enough energy to start strengthening the roots when it reached the six-leaf stage. So, if pulling, never allow plants to produce more than six leaves.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

More information on field bindweed control is available from the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). Archives of "Bluestem Breezes" may be found at wabaunsee.ksu.edu.