



Noxious Weed Fact Bulletin

A partnership between Island County Noxious Weed Board & Whidbey Island Conservation District

Velvetleaf, *Abutilon theophrasti*



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Velvetleaf is an erect annual shrub-like herb in the Mallow family, Malvaceae, with leaves and stems covered with hairs. Leaves are alternate, heart-shaped, and gradually tapering to a point (acuminate). Leaves are approximately 2 to 6 inches long and wide, densely hairy on both surfaces, and have toothed margins. Leaf veins originate from a common point (palmate venation), and leaves emit an unpleasant odor when crushed. Erect stems are covered with soft hairs, each up to 7 feet in height and are mostly unbranched. Flowers can be found singly or in clusters. They are .5 inch to 1 inch (1-2.5 cm) in diameter, and consist of 5 orange-yellow petals. Flowering occurs from July through August.

Native to southern Asia, Velvetleaf reproduces from seeds that are produced in a circular capsule fruit (1 inch in diameter). Velvetleaf was originally cultivated as a source of fiber. It is a summer annual, which means that it germinates in the spring and flowers in the summer, typically from July to September in this area. It is self-pollinating so it doesn't require pollinators to set seed. One plant can produce up to 17,000 seeds, and seeds can remain viable in the soil for 50 to 60 years. It is now classified as a **Class B** noxious weed in Island County, so property owners are required to control this plant when it occurs on their property.

Individual plants can be easily pulled or dug up before they go to seed, so early detection and rapid response is not difficult with this weed. All plant material should be carefully bagged and discarded with the garbage to avoid spreading the seeds. Seedbed tillage, rotary hoeing, and mechanical cultivation are effective but short term where seeds are buried. If any equipment is used where this plant occurs, clean it carefully before moving it to a new area. It can be effectively controlled with post-emergence herbicides, but repeat applications may be necessary to reduce densities. Always carefully follow label instructions and state requirements when using herbicides.

As always, if you have more questions you can contact the Island County Noxious Weed Coordinator at 678-7992, or at: janet.stein@wsu.edu. For more information on Velvetleaf, visit the Washington Noxious Weed Control Board website here:

<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=111>

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