

Utah State University Extension offices, across the state, field many yard and garden questions. One that is among the most common is how to get rid of field bindweed, often referred to incorrectly as morning glory. Actual morning glory is an ornamental annual that is much easier to control.

Field bindweed is native to the Middle East to climates similar to those in the arid west. And because it is so adapted to dry areas, it is at its worst as a weed in our region. It survives here so well because it can root over 10 feet deep, often into permanent ground water. It can also reproduce from underground runners and seeds stay viable in the soil for up to 50 years. It also shades the soil due to its dense foliage, making it harder for other plants to germinate from lacking sunlight. To make things worse, it also monopolizes ground water and nutrients, making it difficult for other plants to grow enough to compete against it. Many consider its worst characteristic its vining nature, where it can climb several feet to choke out living plants and many other things in the yard. It can even be problematic around air conditioning units by clogging vents and interfering with heat dissipation. I have also seen on several occasions where it has grown through cracks in building foundations and appeared inside buildings.

Bindweed can be suppressed using nonherbicide options. Note that I said suppressed and not controlled. And so, one nonherbicide option is to hand pull or cultivate it every few weeks. This works well in smaller areas, but be aware that it will take around 10 years of regular cultivation to sap the energy from the roots enough to kill it. Another method is to blanket areas with large pieces of scrap cardboard and then cover the cardboard with 3 - 4 inches of mulch or wood shavings. This must be renewed every year. It does not kill the bindweed but will prevent it from sprouting in the area.

As far as herbicide options, late summer into mid-fall is the best time for control. This is due to nutrients and sugars being transported from above-ground parts to the roots for the winter. If an herbicide is applied at this time, it is also transported to the roots with the nutrients and sugars where it is stored and gives a more effective kill. In lawns, herbicides containing quinclorac seem to be especially effective. There are several brands available from local hardware stores, garden centers, and farm stores.

In vegetable gardens, finish harvesting everything you want for the season before applying an herbicide. Carefully remove all of the spent plants excluding the bindweed. After doing this, spray the bindweed with a product containing glyphosate. You may get a better kill if you add a spreader-sticker or a surfactant to the mix. You can remove the bindweed a week or two after spraying and finish preparing the soil for spring at this time.

Flowerbeds are the most difficult place to get rid of field bindweed. Instead of detailing here to use herbicide in this situation, the KSL Greenhouse Show YouTube channel has a USU Extension produced video you can watch with simple instructions. It can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/1shsKLITLSg>.