

## Field Bindweed Control Methods

When European pioneers first settled in Utah, they had many challenges. They had to build homes, work soil that had never been farmed, find food and many others. Fortunately, one thing these settlers did not have to deal with was many noxious weeds that are common today. These weeds have been introduced from other areas of the world, and have mainly become established over the last 100 years. One of the worst of these is a vine referred to as field bindweed or morning glory. From spring to fall its white flowers can be seen.

According to North Dakota State University, field bindweed is native to Europe and Asia, and was introduced to the United States in colonial times. Additionally, it is now present in most of the United States but is at its worst in the Midwest and West. Most gardeners and farmers have had to deal with this weed at some point. In fact, my great grandfather lost his entire farm in Idaho to field bindweed in the 1930s.

Fortunately, since then, some non-chemical solutions have been found that are somewhat successful in certain situations such as newer and small infestations. One option is to completely remove seedlings just as they emerge from the soil. These new plants do not have the ability to produce the runners that generate other new plants for the first three to four weeks of life. Otherwise, for more established infestations, where practical, covering the area with black plastic sheeting for at least a year is an option. Another similar method that has worked for some involves covering the impacted area with cardboard and then placing several inches of mulch over the cardboard and letting this sit for at least a year. For either of these to be successful, no light can reach the bindweed.

In areas where field bindweed is established to a greater extent, cultivation is an option for suppressing it. However, cultivation should be performed every two to three weeks as plants reach about six inches tall and not just once in a while. If practical, collect cultivated vines and throw them away.

Many herbicides are available for suppressing bindweed, but none offer complete control. In early spring and during the growing season, pre-emergent herbicides such as prodiamine (labeled for lawn use) and trifluralin (usable on many garden crops and not lawns) control newly germinating plants.

Post emergent herbicides such as glyphosate (RoundUp type products) and lawn weed killers (products containing 2,4-D) also can be used to reduce infestations of actively growing plants. For the best results, apply a combination of these in early autumn after frost but while the vines are still green. Caution must be taken when using this mix, though. It will kill or damage most desirable plants, including grass, shrubs and trees. Unlike lawn weed killer, glyphosate can carefully be used in hot weather, for suppression. Always read and follow pesticide labels to maximize protection of yourself and others and for the greatest effectiveness of the product.