



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
(360) 354-3990 www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds

BITTER NIGHTSHADE

Solanum dulcamara

THREAT: Also called bittersweet and climbing nightshade, bitter nightshade is a native to Europe. In this area, it grows in disturbed areas, thickets, roadsides, open forests and moist clearings, where it can form a dense tangled mass over other vegetation. Although the bright red berries produced by this plant may be attractive to children, it is the unripe green berries that are most toxic. Due to their bitter taste, the berries are seldom eaten in large enough quantities to cause poisoning..

DESCRIPTION: Bitter Nightshade is a perennial related to tomatoes. It is a woody climbing or trailing vine growing 2-10 feet or more. The pointed, oval-shaped leaves grow 1-4 inches long and often have ear-like lobes at the base. The leaves are alternate and have a strong odor. The drooping flowers, which look similar to tomato flowers, are purplish and grow in loose clusters. Green berries are produced, which turn bright red when ripe and can remain on the vine into winter. Eating large quantities of the green berries can be dangerous.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Bitter nightshade can be controlled through mechanical and chemical means. Cultivation destroys the root system, although the area must be watched for new seedlings. Bitter nightshade can also be hand dug. If the plants are growing into adjacent vegetation, the vines can be cut and left, while the root is dug out. For site-specific chemical control recommendations, contact the Weed Control Board.

