



# Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226  
(360) 354-3990 [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pubwks/noxious/noxious/htm](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pubwks/noxious/noxious/htm)

## KOCHIA

*Kochia scoparia*

**THREAT:** Kochia, a plant native to Asia, was introduced to North America from Europe, as an ornamental. Kochia spreads only by seed but each plant may produce up to 50,000 seeds. In the fall, the dry plant can break off at the soil surface and act as a tumbleweed, further spreading seed. The seeds germinate under a wide range of temperature and soil conditions. Kochia develops a large root system that can efficiently gather water in dry locations, making this a drought resistant plant. Kochia has sometimes been used as forage for livestock, although toxic compounds in the plant can cause livestock poisoning if kochia is the only feed available. In Washington, kochia is more of a problem weed east of the Cascades but can also be found in western Washington. Kochia invades road shoulders, railroad right-of-ways, disturbed areas and agricultural crops.



**DESCRIPTION:** Kochia is an annual, with seeds germinating in early spring. It can grow to a height of 6 feet, with many branches extending from a main stem, giving the plant a bushy appearance. Kochia is blue-green to gray-green during the growing season, but turns reddish in the late summer. The stems can have lengthwise stripes either of light and dark green, or of green and red. Kochia has narrow, lance-shaped leaves, ½ to 2 inches long. The leaves are alternate, with 3-5 parallel veins. The stems, branches and underside of the leaves are hairy. Kochia flowers from July until frost kills the plant. The flowers are 1/8 inch or smaller and are greenish in color. Flowers are borne in small spikes toward the ends of the branches. Kochia has a taproot with a branched fibrous root system. Plants have been found with roots reaching 8 feet deep.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Kochia can be controlled through mechanical and chemical means. Shallow cultivation can be used for control of kochia. Deep cultivation can bury the seeds, where the seeds remain viable until later brought to the surface, where they germinate. Mowing and grazing are not effective controls. Some kochia plants have become resistant to certain herbicides. Contact the weed control board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

