



Common Bugloss

(*Anchusa officinalis*)

Description:

Common Bugloss (*Anchusa officinalis*) is a perennial plant, growing from one to two feet tall. The stems and leaves are fleshy, and the overall plant is coarsely hairy. The basal leaves are narrowly oblong, leaves along the plant stems are slightly pointed and progressively smaller up the stem. The blue to purple flowers have white centers, and are found in cymes, or helicoids clusters (curled like a scorpion), uncoiling and straightening out as the flowers open. Each flower produces a four chambered nutlet, each chamber containing one seed. The plants have stout, woody tap roots. Common bugloss plants form a basal rosette of leaves in its first year. A single flowering stalk is formed in the second year, and multiple stalks appear in subsequent years. A single plant can produce about 900 seeds a year.



Photo by Leo Michels

Impacts:

Common Bugloss invades fields, pastures, and competes with more desirable vegetation such as native plants and crops. It causes spoilage in baled hay because the succulent leaves and stems become moldy. Common Bugloss is in the borage family, of which many species contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids which are toxic to livestock and humans. Because the seeds of this plant can remain dormant for many years, it can become a persistent weed problem.

Control Options:

Thurston County's Integrated Pest Management emphasizes cultural, biological, and manual control methods to keep pests and vegetation problems low enough to prevent damage. The goal of Thurston County's pesticide use policy is to minimize the use of pesticides by utilizing and providing information about the most effective control options that are available and practical.



Photo by Enrico Romani

► Cultural / Habitat

The most effective control of Common Bugloss is prevention. Above all, prevent plants from going to seed. Occasionally it is introduced as a component in wildflower seed mixtures. Review the ingredients of wildflower mixes to avoid accidental introduction, and avoid using wildflower mixes with unidentified seed components entirely. To prevent plants from spreading from known infestations, carefully clean vehicles, boots, clothing, and pets after visiting infested areas.

► Manual / Mechanical

Large, woody tap roots make Common Bugloss very difficult to remove manually. Small infestations can be grubbed out with a pick or mattock, removing as much root as possible. Be careful to collect and dispose of all the pieces of roots and crown to prevent them from re-establishing.

► Biological

There are currently no known biological control agents available for Common Bugloss.

► **Chemical**

Spot spraying with an herbicide containing the active ingredient **glyphosate** (example: Roundup Pro®, Glyphos®, etc.) can be effective in controlling Common Bugloss. Currently, products containing the active ingredient glyphosate are the only herbicides for the control of Common Bugloss that are considered “low in hazard” by Thurston County’s pesticide review process for the potential for chemical mobility and persistence.



John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org

Thurston County has observed that most ready-to-use, pre-mixed products do not contain sufficient active ingredients to be as effective as concentrated products that are then mixed with water to create a specific finished concentration. The following instructions are for products containing 41% glyphosate which will be mixed down to a specified dilution rate. Be sure to read your label carefully, and make adjustments to rates accordingly.

Foliar applications of glyphosate (ROUNDUP PRO™):

- Using a spot application, spray each plant thoroughly on the stems and leaves, enough to be wet but not dripping. Spot application means the herbicide is applied only to the Common Bugloss plants, and not on the surrounding plants or soil. A 2% glyphosate solution (after mixing for use) is necessary to control Common Bugloss. Follow label directions for mixing product to application strength.
- Glyphosate is non-selective, and will injure any plants that it comes in contact with, including grass.
- Keep people and pets off treated areas until spray solution has dried.

Herbicide & Method	Product Rates	Mix
RoundUp Pro® Spot/Foliar	2%	To 1 gallon of water add 2.66 oz. RoundUp Pro™, apply to foliage at or beyond bud stage.

Timing: Spot applications should be applied at bud stage, prior to blooming. Common Bugloss blooms from June until a hard frost. For most effective treatments, apply before plants produce seed.

READ AND FOLLOW ALL LABEL DIRECTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS. Use of brand names does not imply endorsement and is for reference only; other formulations of the same herbicides may be available under other names. Information provided is current as of the date of the fact sheet. Pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.



REFERENCES:

- WSU/Cooperative Ext "Noxious Weed Facts"
- Guide to Weeds in British Columbia
- Safety Issues Affecting Herbs: *Pyrrrolizidine Alkaloids*, by Subhuti Dharmananda, Ph.D., Director, Institute for Traditional Medicine, Portland, OR
- Consumer Healthcare Products Association News Release, July 9, 2001
- Washington State Weed Board's Written Findings



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