



Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*)

Description: Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*) is a member of the Buttercup family of plants (*Ranunculaceae*). It is a woody perennial vine that has a vigorous growth habit and can grow up to 95 feet long and is also known by the name Traveler's Joy.

The vine produces compound leaves that emerge opposite each other and consist of five leaflets, with the upper leaflet sometimes three lobed. Individual flowers are about an inch in diameter, greenish white and found in clusters. The flowers do not have petals, they consist of four sepals and many stamens and styles.

The common name "Old Man's Beard" is from the seed stage of the flower, when a mass of white is produced from the long, feathery styles that elongate and stay attached to the small hairy seed. Fluffy seed-heads persist through winter.



Photo by Nancy Ness

Impacts: Old Man's Beard is a non-native, invasive vine in the Pacific Northwest. In New Zealand, it is reported that vines climb the tallest forest trees, forming a dense canopy that blocks sunlight and suppresses all vegetation beneath it. At one forest reserve, up to 25 percent of the understory species had been lost. Old Man's Beard can be so vigorous that the weight of the plant can break the supporting trees.

- Old Man's Beard can grow five to seven times faster than ivy, with each stem capable of producing 30 feet of growth in one season.
- Each plant can produce over 100,000 seeds, which are dispersed by wind, water, people and animals.
- Seed can remain viable and dormant for up to 10 years, allowing a substantial seed bank to form.
- Plants can also sprout from broken stem fragments, usually older stem fragments which hold more water.

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 Integrated Pest Management is to minimize the use of pesticides by utilizing and providing information about the most effective control options that are available and practical.



► Cultural / Habitat

Do not plant old man's beard in your landscape. Planting conifers in an area where these plants have been removed or chemically controlled can help reduce seed germination by reducing available sunlight. Dense, native ground cover may also significantly reduce seed germination and re-establishment of old man's beard.

► Manual / Mechanical

Young plants and seedlings can be pulled or hand dug. All vines running along the ground and just under the surface must be dug out. Roots broken off at least 2 inches below the surface usually do not survive. Climbing vines can be cut at waist height and left to die in the trees. Leaving the vines in the trees to dry out before removing may reduce damage to the trees, but ensure that no hanging vines are in contact with the ground. After cutting climbing vines, the lower vines and shallow roots need to be removed or they will re-sprout.

► Biological

There are currently no biological control agents available for Old Man's Beard in the United States.

► Chemical

Contact herbicides kill the plant tissue it touches, and systemic herbicides are taken into the plant and transported throughout the plant to kill all the tissue. A systemic herbicide is recommended for control of old man's beard because even small stem fragments left alive can root and start a new plant.

Glyphosate is an active ingredient in many systemic herbicide products that are effective in the control of old man's beard. Application methods vary for the type and size of the infestation; foliar applications (spraying leaves and stems) are recommended for large ground infestations, basal bark applications (applying product to vine after removing a section of the outer layer of bark) work when upper portions of vines are inaccessible, and cut stem applications (applying directly onto cut vine stumps) are most effective when combined with manual removal of vines and plant fragments.



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.



Treatment method	Rates, at 4 lb. per gallon A.I.	Mix
Spot Foliar application	2%	To 1 gallon of water add 2.66 oz. RoundUp Pro®
Basal Bark application Cut stem application	50 to 100%	For more tender, greener stems, dilute 50/50 with water. For older, woody vines, use full strength.

Timing

The best chemical control is achieved when temperatures are above 50° F for several days. Ground infestations can be treated from spring through fall, and since old man's beard is typically easiest to find when the fluffy seed-heads are ripe in fall or winter, a basal bark or cut-stem application can be effective when the upper portions of the vines are out of reach. Late treatments can be effective and can also minimize the risk to other plants when they are typically dormant. Shielding or covering neighboring plants is always a good idea to protect them from herbicidal injury.

A combined method of locating and cutting the vines well above ground level, removing the cut material in the late fall or winter, then returning the following late spring or summer and applying herbicide to the re-growth, is a very effective control plan for old man's beard, and may reduce the necessary amount of herbicide.

READ AND FOLLOW ALL LABEL DIRECTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS. Obey all label precautions and safety measures. Always use personal protective equipment that includes coveralls, waterproof gloves, shoes plus socks, and protective eyewear. Use of brand names does not connote 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:

Oregon Department of Agriculture, http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/WEEDS/profile_oldmansbeard.shtml

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, Old man's Beard. http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_info/clematis_vitalba.html

Global Invasive Species Database http://www.invasivespecies.net/database/species/impact_info.asp?si=157&fr=1&sts=

The Nature Conservancy <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/moredocs/clevit01.pdf>



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