

PARASITIC PLANT WARNING

Japanese Dodder, (*Cuscuta japonica*)

This noxious plant was recently removed from an area in Antioch by the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture.

Japanese dodder is a very aggressive parasitic plant that affects ornamental plantings and agricultural crops as well as having the potential to severely alter the composition and function of riparian areas. It is a "Q" rated noxious plant by the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) and it is listed as a Federal noxious weed. The dodder itself looks very similar to a thick diameter spaghetti noodle that is bright yellow-orange. It can completely engulf host plants and often drapes to the ground.

It was found for the first time in Contra Costa County last summer, and discovered in July 2006 in a residential area of Antioch. Japanese dodder was first found in California in Redding in the summer of 2004, then in Yuba County in 2005. The Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture has removed all infested plant material from the Antioch site. Eradication is completed by removal and burial of all infested plant material. It is suspected that the introduction is the result of illegal importation of dodder seed.



Japanese dodder is very different from our eight Bay Area native dodder species. The native dodders attack small plants like tomato, alfalfa and pickleweed. The Asian dodders attack a wide variety of smaller plants, shrubs and a wide host of full grown trees including many of our native trees and fruit trees.



The non-native dodder species is spread both by seed and vegetatively, and can aggressively move to other host plants. Once a seed or growing tip finds a host, it sends root-like structures called haustoria into this host's limbs, sucking out water and nutrients that can eventually kill it. Japanese dodder attacks full grown trees including many of our California native and agricultural fruit trees.

The seeds purportedly have medicinal properties in some cultures, and may have been imported illegally and inadvertently spread. There is a Federal Department of Agriculture quarantine against importing plants or viable seed.

More information about this plant can be found on Contra Costa County's website at:

www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/agriculture/dodder.html

or by contacting Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture (925) 646-5250

If you live in Antioch and think you have seen this plant growing in your neighborhood, please contact the City of Antioch Public Works Department immediately at (925) 779-6950.