Prostrate knotweed is a seed-producing summer annual which grows in yards, along sidewalks, waste places, roadways, paths, and any place that soil may be so compacted that other plants will not grow or grow poorly. It has a variety of other common names such as: dooryard weed, pinkweed, and dishwater weed (taken from the old habit of throwing soapy water into the backyard, which killed grass). Although prostrate knotweed will grow in moist flowerbeds, it can withstand trampling and drought and is usually found on portions of yards which receive abuse.

As the common name indicates, prostrate knotweed grows nearly flat on the ground forming a dense mat. From the crown, stems branch out in all directions to a distance of about 2 feet. Where there is competition for light, ends of the stems may ascend up to 9 inches.

Slender stems are tough and wiry. Each joint or node (knot) is covered with a papery scale or sheath. This is a characteristic of the buckwheat family, Polygonaceae.

Small leaves are alternate on the stems. Oblong to lance-shaped, these pale-green leaves are narrow at the base and come to a point at the tip. Basal portions of leaves often look as if they are covered with a white "mildew." Leaves commonly measure 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches long by 1/3 to 3/8 inch wide.

Flowers are small, yellowish-white to greenish, found clustered in the axils of leaves (where leaf meets stem). Flower parts may have a pinkish tinge.

Reddish-brown seeds have a dull surface, and are 3-angled or triangular.

The root is a small, thin, taproot.

Prostrate knotweed can be effectively controlled, when plants are small and actively growing, with repeated applications of silvex and 2,4-D. Mature plants are resistant to both chemicals.

Endothall has been particularly effective for selective knotweed control, but may temporarily discolor perennial turfgrass. Also effective is dicamba (Banvel-D), which does not harm turf, but should be used with caution around ornamentals and trees.

Effective in tests, but as yet unapproved for turf use is the brush-killer 4-amino-3,5,6-trichloropicolinic acid, trademarked Tordon.

Prostrate knotweed will succumb to spot treatment of most general-contact herbicides. Due to its shallow and persistent habit of annual growth, knotweed will be one of the first weeds to re-invade a previously sterilized area and will indicate the need for retreatment.

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