Controlling Common Milkweed
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IPM Facts
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IPM FACTS

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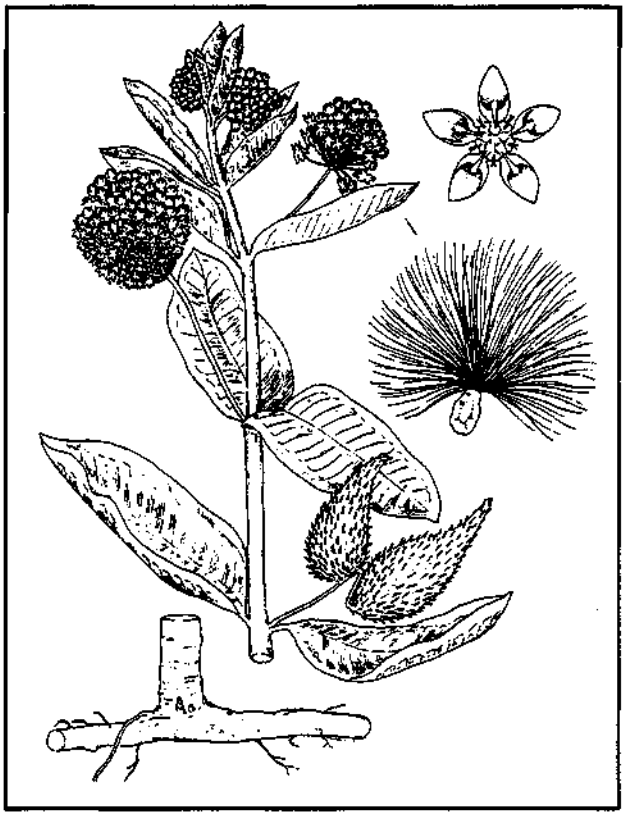
What is a Perennial Weed?

A perennial weed is any weed capable of surviving for three or more years. Perennial weeds are characterized by vegetative reproduction. Vegetative reproduction in these species is due to (a) rhizomes - underground creeping stems commonly found in perennial grasses; (b) stolons - prostrate stems or runners on the soil surface with roots at the nodes; (c) creeping roots; (d) tubers - underground enlarged storage stems; or (e) bulbs - underground storage organs consisting of a stem axis covered with many overlapping leaf scales.

Perennial weeds may or may not reproduce by seed. They always, however, have the potential to reproduce by vegetative means.



Description of Common Milkweed

Common milkweed grows from creeping roots. Stems are coarse, usually non-branched, 2 to 5 feet tall, and covered with short downy hairs. The plant has a milky juice. Leaves are oblong, 4 to 8 inches long and 2 to 7 inches wide, leathery, and have prominent veins. The sweet-smelling flowers are found in ball-like clusters and are pink to white. Seed pods are grayish, hairy, and covered with soft spines. Seeds are brown, flat, oval, with a tuft of silky hairs at the tip. Common milkweed reproduces by seed and underground spreading roots.

Common milkweed is often found as scattered plants in cultivated fields, especially under minimum tillage conditions, pastures, and wastelands. Seedlings become perennials within 21 days of emergence.

Methods of Control

Methods of perennial weed control fall into three categories: (a) cultural, such as crop rotation; (b) mechanical, tillage including various implements such as plows, disks, or cultivators; and (c) chemical, using herbicides. Control of perennial weeds may require a combination of all these methods. Consider the energy and environmental implications when choosing a method of control.

Mechanical Control

Mechanical control may increase or decrease perennial weed infestations. Tillage may increase infestations by moving perennial weeds to new areas of the field or breaking dormancy of underground buds resulting in new shoot growth. Tillage during cool, wet conditions results in reduced control.

Tillage may decrease perennial weed infestations if done frequently enough to deplete underground root reserves. The field should be tilled every two or three weeks. Warm, dry soil conditions increase the effectiveness of tillage for perennial weed control by drying plant roots on the soil surface.

Chemical Control of Common Milkweed

Soybeans

Cultivation will suppress growth. Roundup ropewick applications provide fair control of top growth only.

Corn

Herbicide	Rate	Timing[1] (Weed height)	Effectiveness
Banvel	1/2 pt/A	POST (8")	Poor-Fair
Banvel + 2,4-D amine	1/4 pt/A + 1/2 pt/A	POST (8")	Poor-Fair
2,4-D amine	1 pt/A	POST (8")	Poor

Spot Treatments and Between Crops

Herbicide	Rate	Timing[1] (Weed growth stage)	Effectiveness
Roundup	2%	Spot treatment (late bud to flower)	Fair-Good
Roundup	3 qt/A	Late bud to flower	Fair-Good
Banvel	1 - 2 qt/A[2]	Late bud to flower	Fair-Good
Banvel + 2,4-D ester	1/2 pt/A + 1 pt/A	Late bud to flower	Fair

[1] Fall applications provide the most effective control.
[2] Banvel at 1 qt/A will provide suppression; 2 qt/A will provide control.

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To protect yourself and others and the environment, always read the label before applying any pesticide.

This publication contains pesticide recommendations based on research and pesticide regulations. However, changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly. Some pesticides mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. If you have questions about the legality and/or registration status for using pesticides, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office.

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