

## **Wild four-o'clock (*Mirabilis nyctaginea*)**

Wild four-o'clock is actually native to the east of the Rocky Mountains, from Montana to Mexico and east to Wisconsin and Alabama. It is a Class A noxious weed listed in 1989, which means the state requires the land owner to eradicate this weed from their property. This weed has the capability of establishing itself in a wide range of habitats, which include orchards, alfalfa fields, range lands, rocky and heavy cultivated soils, fence rows, dry meadows, railroad embankments and in industrial/residential vacant lots. This plant is also found along river banks in high water areas. Washington State has evidence of it spreading over several hundred acres and threatening its abundant agricultural and range lands.

### **Plant Description:**

This weed is a perennial herb that can be up to 3 or 4 feet tall and sometimes have a woody base with a thick, black taproot that can grow up to 2 feet downward. The overall shape is bushy with opposite branches and leaves. The stems are smooth and often four-sided. This weed is hard to notice during the most of the day as the flowers only open late in the afternoon and wither early the next morning, which is where its name came from.

Flowers grow in clusters of 3 to 5 with a diameter of 3/8 inches from a short, hairy flowerstalk at the tips of the plant. The flowers range from a reddish to lavender color. It blooms throughout the summer. The seeds are hard, elongated nutlets that are ready for dispersal from July to September. This plant can also spread by roots and when stems are broken from the crown of the plant, new stems will sprout.

### **Control Methods:**

Due to the roots being strongly rooted and the stems breaking easily at the crown, hand pulling is not recommended. Small infestations can be dug up with all roots removed. Repeated mowing will prevent seed production and lower seed bank and eventually the plant will die from nutrient loss in the root system.

For cultural methods of control, plowing infested areas and planting a cultivated crop for 2 years will work. Field corn has shown to compete well with wild four o'clock.

The extensive root system and waxy covering on the leaves, makes the effectiveness of the herbicides challenging. For herbicide recommendations please refer to the PNW Weed Management Handbook or contact the Chelan County Noxious Weed board for assistance.



Jennifer Andreas, WSU Exte



The involucre aids in the dispersal of the seeds, acting as small umbrella that can attach to the undercarriage of vehicles.

Jennifer Andreas, WSU Extension



Opposite leaves and branches that are waxy and usually hairless.





A thick, black taproot that can extend downward up to two feet is typical of wild four-o'clock.