

Nova Scotia Noxious Weeds

Hedge-Nettle, *Stachys palustris* L.

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Hedge-nettle is a perennial weed found in areas of poor drainage. It grows up to 100 cm in height forming dense clumps. The leaves are opposite, stalkless or occurring on short petioles. They are lanceolate to elliptic in shape, up to 15 cm in length with serrate edges and a pointed tip. Both surfaces are hairy and have a deep green colour. Stems are square in cross section, erect, branched and covered with bristly hairs. Flowers are rose-purple in colour, mottled with light and dark tones, producing a whorl in the axils of the upper leaves. Individual flowers have a two-lobed upper lip and a three-lobed lower lip and are up to 1.5 cm long. There are usually six flowers to a whorl. Several whorls near the top of the stem form the inflorescence which may be up to 25 cm long.



Life Cycle

Hedge-nettle is perennial, spreading by rhizome and seed. Flowering occurs from late June to September with each flower producing four dark brown seeds. Seeds drop close to the parent plant and may move by water or wildlife. Rhizomes spread in all directions from the parent plant. Stems arise from the upturned ends of rhizomes, producing dense clumps. Plants overwinter as rhizomes, which are whitish, often much branched with thick elongated brittle tubers.

Habitat

Hedge-nettle prefers poorly drained sites. It can be found along margins of watercourses, roadsides, cultivated fields and waste places. Collections have been made throughout the province.



Effects

Hedge-nettle can be a serious problem due to its competitive ability and tolerance of management practices. Plants are easily spread by seed and through cultivation of the roots. It is extremely competitive and difficult to control. Livestock may refuse to eat the plant either green or in hay due to its bristles and unpleasant taste.

There are 32 species of *Stachys* occurring in North America, with approximately 25 native and seven introduced species forming a large complex. Native and introduced species are differentiated by chromosome number and morphology. There is no evidence that the native forms are weedy.

Other common names include marsh hedge-nettle, woundwort, roughweed, clown's heal and dead nettle.

Control

Hedge-nettle is a deep rooted perennial which is very difficult to control. Repeated cultivation may help deplete root reserves and prevent seed production. Care should be taken to wash machinery to remove seed or rhizome segments before leaving infested fields.

Herbicides have been found to have little effect on hedge-nettle. Summer fallow, utilizing repeat applications of glyphosate followed by cultivation throughout the growing season, may provide some control. For further information or herbicide application rates, consult your weed inspector or the most recent Guide to Weed Control (Publication 75).

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