



Feathery plumes carry stinkwort seeds long distances.

THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

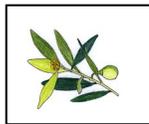
The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit conservation organization founded in 1965 and dedicated to the protection and appreciation of California's native plants.

The CNPS East Bay Chapter encompasses Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Its activities include hikes, lectures, scientific studies, conservation, restoration, and horticulture. All activities are open to the public and are free of charge. It operates Native Here Nursery, which specializes in locally-sourced native plants for gardeners and restorationists.

The East Bay is home to more than 1,300 kinds of native plants, and supports a remarkable 95 kinds of rare and endangered plants, including several found nowhere else in the world.

To learn more about our activities, go to ebcnps.org

California Native Plant Society
East Bay Chapter, Dittrichia Project
P.O. Box 5597 Elmwood Station
Berkeley, CA 94705



STINKWORT—

A NEW THREAT TO CONTRA COSTA COUNTY



Photo by Robert E. Preston, Ph.D, © 2004

Stinkwort, or Dittrichia graveolens (*pronounced dye-TRICK-ee-uh grav-ee-OH-lens*) *is a late summer annual that invades grasslands and disturbed areas. Stinkwort degrades open spaces, reduces wildlife habitat, and causes problems for people.*

STINKWORT first appeared in Contra Costa County around 1996. For the first ten years, it remained along roadways and vacant lots. More recently it has expanded its range. It is now in parks, trails, open spaces and pasturelands. Although it replaces native and non-native plants used as habitat and forage by wildlife and domestic animals, it has little habitat value—and is bad for people and animals.

Stinkwort is listed by the California Invasive Plant Council as Moderate in invasiveness and **Red Alert** because of its ability to spread rapidly.

POTENTIAL DANGERS OF STINKWORT

Cattle and horses avoid the plant. So as this plant increases – there is less food for livestock in pasturelands. It is toxic to sheep and goats avoid it; stinkwort may be toxic to them, too. No wildlife eat it, even insects on which many birds, reptiles and mammals depend.

Oils from this plant can cause headaches, blistering and itchiness in people. The rash is unpleasant—similar to that caused by poison oak.

APPEARANCE AND LIFE CYCLE

Stinkwort begins growing in June, much later than most weeds. Look for hairy, sticky, green plants with a strong smell, like cough syrup. Stinkwort reaches about 12 to 24 inches in height in the first six weeks

and looks like a small Christmas tree. In good habitat it can grow large and spherical, like a 4-foot Russian thistle. Small yellow flower heads appear all over the plant in August, continuing through November. Dandelion-like plumes are attached to the seeds. Seeds are easily spread by wind, water, vehicles, and animals, and they remain alive in the soil for up to three years.

An average size plant can produce 30,000 seeds. Imagine how many seedlings could grow from only ten or 20 plants!

HOW TO REMOVE

Digging or pulling easily removes the plant, and this is the method we use. Weed-wacking and mowing are ineffective, because the plants continue to grow, flower and set plenty of seed into November. Herbicides containing glyphosate are effective, as is Axxe, a less-persistent “burn-down” herbicide. If you use herbicides, be sure to follow all instructions and precautions on the label.

If you remove stinkwort by hand, wear gloves and long sleeves; plant oils are irritating. Pre-exposure products like Ivy-X help on exposed skin, like wrists. Wash up carefully as you would with poison oak; Tecnu or similar helps remove the oils. Wash clothes separately, with extra rinse.

Plants without buds or flowers can be left on site. Plants with flowers should be bagged and disposed of in garbage, not in green waste or your home composter.



Stinkwort blankets a field.

WHAT LAND MANAGERS ARE DOING

Weed abatement districts in other counties are working on stinkwort control, but there is no concerted agency effort yet in our county. The California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter, is conducting a public awareness project and doing hand-removal work with cooperating neighbors and land owners in Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette and Walnut Creek to reduce and eliminate stinkwort. You can, too!

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE STINKWORT ON YOUR PROPERTY

Send a photo to verify. If you would like advice or help, contact the California Native Plant Society, below.

California Native Plant Society—East Bay Chapter, Dittrichia Project

Contact Barbara M. Leitner
info@ebcnps.org