

## **Controlling Bindweed Takes Dedication and Patience**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Field bindweed is a very common weed, even if you don't know it by name. It's a deep rooted vining perennial that has pretty little white trumpet shaped flowers. It will grow almost anywhere. I've already seen it blooming this spring and it will continue to grow and spread and bloom from now until we have a hard freeze sometime in November. It is native to Europe and western Asia and is thought to have arrived in Kansas as seed in those bags of Turkey Red wheat! We've been fighting it ever since.

After just a couple years of growth, field bindweed can have roots over ten feet deep in the ground and spreading out over 15 feet. This massive root system serves as a massive storage locker for food reserves which make bindweed a challenge to control. Established plants will start growing in early April. Seedlings will start sprouting later in April or early May. Treatment in late April and early May is critical in establishing control as six week old seedlings are already capable of regrowth if the top growth is removed.

Control normally is done through the use of herbicides. Natural controls, like vinegar are unlikely to be successful due to the root system and the plant's ability to regenerate new shoots when top growth is removed. Attempts to control bindweed by tillage will require dedication in removing top growth every two to three weeks. If the vining stems are removed, the plant starts to generate new ones. This new growth uses root reserves. From the time the first new growth appears above ground, root reserves continue to drop as they are moved into new growth.

At 16 days after new growth emerges, root reserves are at their lowest level and start to rebuild quickly. Two weeks later, or 29 days post emergence, the root reserves have been fully restored. Therefore, for maximum effectiveness we recommend removing new growth about every three weeks. In theory the constant removal of the vines weakens the plant to the point that it dies. But be aware that it will take several years for this to happen.

For this reason most people resort to using herbicides to control bindweed. Because of the need to control new seedlings, I like to see a treatment applied in early May. The dandelion type weed killers, (Weed-b-gon, Trimec, etc.) are all effective against bindweed. For bindweed growing in grass settings (lawns, pastures, hay meadows, ditches, etc.) These products are probably the best. In addition to a treatment now to help control seedlings, mid summer and fall treatments are strongly recommended for improved control.

But if bindweed is growing around gardens, flower beds, ornamentals, we have a real challenge. In gardens or flower beds it's best to try to move the vines away from desirable plants and carefully treat with a glyphosate product (Roundup, Kleenup, etc.) Remember, glyphosate is non selective and can kill or damage almost any plant it touches. But it doesn't have soil activity so it won't carry over in the soil. Many times, after the garden season is over you can clear the garden, let the bindweed grow and then spray with a heavy dose of glyphosate in October. Even with herbicides, plan to stay at it for two to three years to get thorough control.

Yes, field bindweed is a pain to have in your yard or garden, field or pasture. But more importantly, it is a noxious weed in Kansas. If you have it growing on your property, control attempts need to be initiated. Even without legal action, failure to control it will result in a great deal of frustration for you as it will out compete most anything else!