

WEED OF THE MONTH

STINKWORT

February 2026



Introduction

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.

Stinkwort is listed as a B-rated noxious weed. It currently exists in many parts of Sutter County and can be spotted in disturbed soils of roadsides, wastelands, gravel areas, levees, and washes. They can also be found in pastures, fields, riparian woodlands, and margins of tidal marshes or vernal pools.

Identification & Behavior

Stinkwort is an erect, fall-flowering annual growing up to 3 ft. tall. It is native to southern Europe and was first reported in California in the mid-1980's. The sticky, glandular-hairy foliage is intensely aromatic. The oil on the foliage, especially on mature plants, makes it difficult to control with postemergence herbicides.

Stinkwort germinates during winter but remains small until spring. During late spring and summer, it develops into a shrubby, pyramid (or sphere) shaped plant which resembles Russian thistle or Kochia.

Its leaves are linear to lance-shaped, typically 0.5 to 1 inches long. Its seeds are tiny, with a barbed pappus, and are readily distributed by wind, water, or by sticking to fur or clothing.

Impact

Stinkwort is rapidly expanding its range. Often found in disturbed sites on the urban fringe, where its sticky, smelly foliage interferes with human activity. In Australia, where stinkwort has been for 150 years, it has naturalized in many habitats.

Stinkwort causes allergic dermatitis in humans. It has also been implicated in livestock deaths from enteritis, caused by the barbed pappus bristles puncturing the small intestine. Its impact in natural areas is not known, but it is just beginning to invade open riparian or grazing areas. The seeds have a short life in the soil, usually less than 3 years.

Top left: Stinkwort young plant
Middle: Stinkwort infestation
Right: Stinkwort flower head

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Control & Management

Mechanical control methods include hand pulling, cutting or disking. Stinkwort has a relatively shallow root system which can be controlled by hoeing or pulling. When doing any kind of mechanical control of stinkwort, it is important to wear appropriate protective clothing to minimize exposure to the irritating oils.

Chemical control methods should be applied postemergence to rapidly growing plants. Smaller plants are easier to control. Many sources recommend using ester formulations of growth regulator herbicides due to its sticky foliar oils.

Prevention

Identification is key when it comes to preventing and controlling the spread of Stinkwort. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (530) 822-7500.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

Resources

For more information about Stinkwort, visit the UC Davis Weed Research and Information Center website at:

<https://ucdavis.app.box.com/s/t266vkfh1ym7bb7j57k5ufkrv9vrby3v/file/2053588119750>

For more weed newsletters or information about our other county programs, visit our website at:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

-Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office



Top left: Stinkwort seeds
Right: Stinkwort flower

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