



Control Options for Bitter Nightshade

General Information

Also called bittersweet and climbing nightshade, bitter nightshade is a native to Europe. In this area, it grows in disturbed areas, thickets, roadsides, open forests and moist clearings, where it can form a dense tangled mass over other vegetation. Although the bright red berries produced by this plant may be attractive to children, it is the unripe green berries that are most toxic. Due to their bitter taste, the berries are seldom eaten in large enough quantities to cause poisoning.



Manual/Mechanical Techniques

Small infestations of bitter nightshade can be controlled through digging and pulling. This is most effective in loose soils or after rain. Care should be taken to remove as much of the root system as possible. If the plants are growing into adjacent vegetation, the vines can be cut and left, while the root is dug out. Cultivation destroys the root system, although the area must be watched for new seedlings. Control efforts will need to be repeated for as long as necessary to remove resprouts. Plants can be cut to the ground, then covered with heavy duty woven plastic fabric. Fabric needs to be in place for at least 2 years and checked frequently to inspect for holes and plants growing out from edges.

Chemical Recommendations

Bitter nightshade can be managed using specific herbicides. Since the plant is often growing with other desirable plants, care should be taken not to injure off-target plants. When using herbicides, always read and follow label directions for rates, spraying conditions, personal protective equipment and grazing intervals. If spraying is the chosen option, spray late in the evening to reduce the direct impact on pollinating insects. Do not spray when it is windy or raining, or when rain is forecast. Herbicides should not be sprayed within 60 feet of water bodies and creeks, without further consultation with the Noxious Weed Board. Remember, it is the herbicide applicators responsibility to apply the product in accordance to the instructions on the label.

Herbicides which contain the active ingredients *glyphosate* (Round Up®, many others), *triclopyr* (Garlon®, others) or *imazapyr* (Habitat®, others) are effective in controlling bitter nightshade. Glyphosate can be applied as a foliar treatment throughout the summer, after the plants are fully leafed out. It can also be applied as a cut-stump treatment, wiping the herbicide on each cut stem as soon as possible after cutting. Triclopyr can be applied as a foliar spray, when the plants are actively growing, and can also be used as a cut-stump treatment. Imazapyr can be applied as a foliar spray when the plants are actively growing. Glyphosate and imazapyr are non-selective herbicides and will damage grass and broad-leaf plants. Imazapyr and triclopyr will damage other woody plants. Imazapyr can be taken up by the roots of non-target plants. Pay careful attention to label instructions and follow directions closely.

NEVER apply RoundUp® or other herbicides to standing water unless they are distinctly labeled for aquatic use. Ingredients in non-aquatic products may be toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms. Aquatic formulations of herbicides are generally only available to licensed pesticide applicators in Washington State. If the target plants are immediately adjacent to or are in standing water, a state permit may be required in order to treat those plants with an aquatically approved herbicide.

- **Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.**
- **More is NOT better when using herbicides, and may actually hinder the ability of the herbicide to injure the target plant if the solution is too strong. This wastes money and effort and puts more product into the environment than is necessary. ALWAYS follow the recommended rates on the label.**
- **With all herbicides, when you apply them is as important as how you apply them.**

The mention of a specific product brand name in this document is not, and should not be construed as an endorsement or as a recommendation for the use of that product. Herbicide information is taken from the WSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook and King County Noxious Weed Program (Seattle, WA).