

Herb Robert

Geranium robertianum Geranium Family

Identification Tips

- Annual or biennial
- Young plants are low-growing rosettes; mature plants are taller (up to 10 inches) with branched stems
- Stems often dark red, covered with white glandular hairs that give them a slightly sticky or oily feel
- Flowers range from bright pink to white
- Deeply dissected green leaves
- In fall, overall foliage turns bright red, especially in sunny areas
- Distinct odor when plant is pulled or crushed

Biology

Spreads entirely by seeds, which can eject 15 to 20 feet from plant. Seeds disperse farther by attaching to animals and foot traffic. Seeds germinate several times a season from early spring to late fall, and remain viable in the soil for 6 years or more. Roots are shallow and fibrous. Flowers mid-spring to late fall. Fruits are long, tapering, and beak-like.

Impacts

Outcompetes native plant species, especially in forest understories. Seeds are sticky and adhere to wildlife, people, and pets, which facilitates a wider range of infestation. Rosettes overwinter, giving them a head start in spring. Appears to inhibit growth or seed germination of other species.

Distribution

Found in ravines, greenbelts, parks, forests, and farmlands, as well as residential settings such as flower gardens, rockeries, and ornamental borders. Thrives in deep shade, but also does well in partly sunny areas. Likes moist soil, but is also found on dry, rocky outcrops and along roadsides. Introduced from Western Europe, possibly as an ornamental species.

What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement to control herb Robert, the King County Noxious Weed Control Board recognizes this plant as invasive and encourages control of existing populations, especially in natural lands and forests.

Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be used throughout several growing seasons. Success in controlling this weed requires the prevention of seeds, competition from more desirable vegetation, and vigilance in removing new growth. Gloves are recommended when handling large

**Non-Regulated Class B
Noxious Weed: Control
Recommended**



Often called "stinky Bob," herb Robert has a distinct odor when pulled or crushed.



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Flowers range from bright pink to white. Fruits are long, tapering, and beak-like.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program: **206-477-WEED** kingcounty.gov/weeds

amounts of this plant, as its sticky oils may cause a slight skin irritation.

Prevention:

Remove plants before they produce flowers and seeds. Don't dispose in home compost piles; seeds can survive and spread from backyard composting. City-provided yard waste bins are OK.

Manual:

Herb Robert has weak roots and pulls up easily. However it can break off at the crown, so pull slowly to get the complete root. Since its seeds have a tendency to spread far and wide, you may find it growing among other invasives, such as ivy and blackberry, or desirable plants such as bleeding heart. This makes the task of hand-pulling a bit more difficult. Pulled plants can re-grow so dispose of them in yard waste bins.

Mechanical:

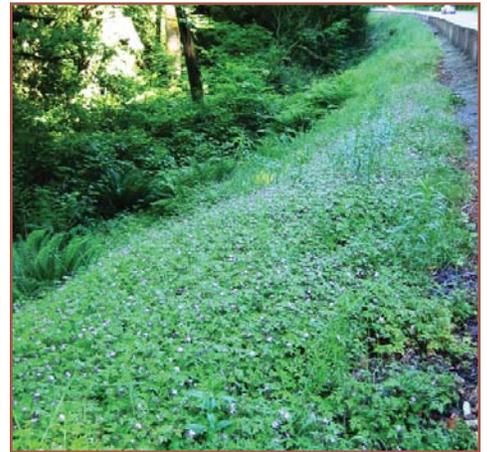
String trimmers can be effective if used before plants set seed. However, herb Robert does sprawl over and among other plants, so care must be taken not to cut down other vegetation.

Chemical:

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for the site: either aquatic or terrestrial. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at the prescribed rate. Systemic herbicides can be effective on herb Robert, especially if combined with monitoring for surviving plants. With herb Robert, generally the younger the plants, the more effective herbicide control is. Products containing glyphosate are effective when applied to young plants. However, glyphosate is "non-selective" and will injure any foliage that it comes in contact with, including grass. Selective broadleaf herbicides with active ingredient triclopyr can work well for lawn areas as they won't harm most grasses. These herbicides are absorbed by foliage and moved throughout the plant to kill the roots; they should be applied to actively growing, preflowering plants to be most effective. For more information, contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.



Herb Robert grows in a variety of settings, from urban to rural.



Originally planted as an ornamental, herb Robert quickly escaped gardens and has spread aggressively throughout western Washington.

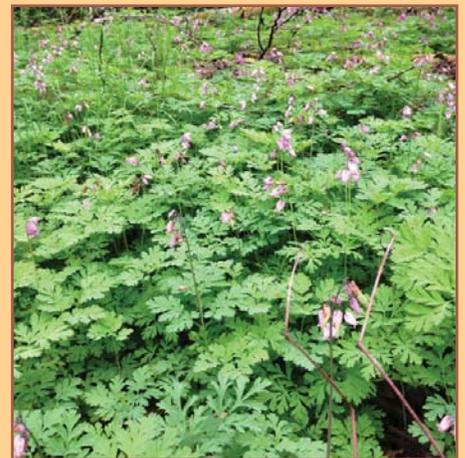
Could be confused with:

Bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*) is a beneficial native plant that looks like and grows in similar places as herb Robert.

Bleeding heart is a low-growing perennial herb with fern-like leaves, similar to herb Robert. Like herb Robert, this plant is found in shaded forest understory areas. However, bleeding heart has no hairs and no "stinky" odor. Once bleeding heart starts to produce its namesake heart-shaped flowers, identification is much easier.



Bleeding heart's namesake flowers.



Like herb Robert, bleeding heart grows in shaded forest understories.