

ALERT !!

Japanese dodder (*Cuscuta japonica*) in California

Robin Marushia and Steve Schoenig - Integrated Pest Control Branch
California Department of Food and Agriculture

(pictures to go along with this alert can be found at
http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/noxweedinfo/pdfs/jdodder_images.pdf
or email Rmarushia@cdffa.ca.gov for a PDF attachment)

Since June 2004, there has been a growing number of California detections of a new invasive noxious weed in California, Japanese dodder (*Cuscuta japonica*). Four new counties have discovered Japanese dodder this year, bringing the total number of counties with detections to seven (**Contra Costa**, Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Shasta, Yolo, and Yuba); however, most infestations have been discovered within the last six months and more are expected. CDFA is requesting assistance from other agencies and conservation groups in locating unknown infestations in order to assess the current distribution of Japanese dodder. So far Japanese dodder has been primarily found in private residences affiliated with the Hmong culture. CDFA is especially interested in occurrences of Japanese dodder in agricultural settings and native ecosystems such as wildlands and riparian zones. Keep in mind that certain parts of the state may have abundant non-invasive native dodder, which could be mistaken for Japanese dodder. Please take care to read the information below about how to discriminate the native and non-native dodder. If in doubt take a sample to your local County Ag Commissioner per instructions below.

What is Japanese dodder?

An exotic, potentially invasive parasitic vine recently introduced to California. Broad host plant range, from annual herbaceous plants to woody trees and shrubs. Rapid growth: up to six inches per day! Reproduces vegetatively (through stem fragments) and by seed. Native to Asia. Probably introduced via Asian immigrants or visitors as an herbal remedy.

What does Japanese dodder look like?

Vibrant yellow-green to gold leafless vine.

Robust, round, twining stems that are fleshy and/or stout (**1 * 3 mm in diameter**), possibly with small red to purplish spots. Mature stems are comparable in size to cooked spaghetti. Unlikely to have flowers (normal flowering season is August * October).

If flowers are found, they will be small (3-7 mm), sessile, pale yellow to cream colored, in short, dense axillary spikes. Infestations often large, spreading, and web-like. Frequently covers large shrubs and small trees.

Where is it likely to be found?

Currently, infestations have been found in **Contra Costa County (El Cerrito, San Pablo and Richmond)**, Shasta County (Redding), Yuba County (Olivehurst and Marysville), Sacramento County (Sacramento), and L.A. County (Los Angeles).

Infestations are highly correlated with Asian immigrant residential neighborhoods.

Possibly near roads and freeways.

Probable hosts include fruit trees and ornamental shrubs, although it can occur in native plants such as willows and oaks.

How is it different from native dodder species?

Japanese dodder is vibrant yellow-green or gold. Native dodders are typically orange. Japanese dodder has thick, robust stems. Native dodder stems are usually more thread or string-like. Japanese dodder infestations are typically large, entirely covering shrubs or trees. Native dodder infestations are likely to be smaller, infecting nonwoody plants or small shrubs. Japanese dodder has been found in residential areas and ornamental plantings. Native dodders are found in wildland areas or crops. Japanese dodder is unlikely to be found in hot, dry desert climates or at high altitudes.

□ If you find an infestation: CALL BETHALLYN at 925 646-6130

Document the Location: (We have a GPS unit that can be used)

If GPS is unavailable, write down the address and/or nearest cross streets and/or directions to the site. Be specific! Identify the host plant(s), if possible. Take pictures of the infestation.

Collect a Sample:

If flowers and/or seed pods are available, include them in the sample. They may be hard to see and require close observation! If flowers and/or seed pods are unavailable, collect 1 * 2 ft. of stem material. Collect parts that are typical of the infestation. Include a sample of the host plant, especially with flowers and/or fruits. Place the sample in a sealed plastic bag without water. LABEL the sample with the collector name, date, and location.

Refrigerate sample if not sending immediately.

Submit the sample to your local County Ag Commissioner's Office or to the UCCE office in Pleasant Hill.

Further Information:

Government Sources:

A similar notice can be accessed online at CDFA's Noxious Weeds Information Project:
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/noxweedinfo/noxweedinfo_jdodder.htm.

Summary of Dodder (*Cuscuta japonica*) Biology, Concerns, and Management (Prepared by C. Markmann, revised and augmented by R. Marushia 06/21/06)
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/noxweedinfo/pdfs/jap_dodder_summary.pdf.

CDFA Pest Exclusion Advisory No. 30-2005. Plant Health and Detection Services, Dec. 1, 2005.
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/noxweedinfo/pdfs/jap_dodder_pea.pdf.

NPAG Data: *Cuscuta japonica* Japanese Dodder. Draft * Nov. 1 2001. Accessed via
www.invasive.org/eastern/other/DicCusCjO01.pdf.

Cuscuta japonica Choisy. Japanese dodder. USDA / NRCS PLANTS Database, Plants Profile.
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=CUJA>.

Sources Regarding Control in Other States:

Japanese Dodder. Domestic Programs Pest Evaluation. Arthur E. Miller, USDA-APHIS PPQ, AERO, Raleigh, NC. October 6, 2003. <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/other/jdodder.html>

Giant Asian Dodder: A New Invasive Plant Detected in Texas. Texas Forest Service and The Texas A&M University System. Kim Camilli, 07/23/2002.
<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/shared/article.asp?DocumentID=370&mc=urb>.

Japanese Dodder. From Clemson University Regulatory and Public Service Programs, web site at: <http://entweb.clemson.edu/caps/state/survey/eradicate/cus/cus.htm>. Accessed at <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/other/clemson.html>.

Herbal Remedy Websites:

Cuscuta Health Article. Tish Davidson and Rebecca Frey of the Gale Group, Inc. Healthline.com 2005.
<http://www.healthline.com/galecontent/cuscuta>

Cuscuta Seed Powder (Tu Si Zi). Chinese Herbs Direct. <http://www.chineseherbsdirect.com/cuscuta-seed-powder-tu-si-zi-p-229.html>