

JANUARY 2007

STEVE'S Weed of the Month

White Bryony

White Bryony is a **Class B Weed**. In regions where a Class B species is already abundant, control is decided at the local level, with containment as the primary goal.

White Bryony (*Bryonia alba* L.) is a native perennial to Europe and Northern Iran. It has been in the Inland Empire area of the Pacific Northwest since the 1970s. White bryony is an herbaceous perennial vine, growing up to 50 feet in length, and resembling Kudzu in its growth habit. White bryony is monoecious (male and female flowers found on the same plant) with a thick, fleshy white root, large lobed leaves, pale white to yellow flowers arranged in clusters, and small red to purple berries. Birds do like to feed on the berries and disseminate the seeds. The plant prefers light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and requires well-drained soil. It can grow in semi-shade or direct sunlight. The root resembles a large turnip but does not spread vegetatively and only spreads by seed. Bryony is a climbing plant, attaching itself to other plants by means of tendrils.



Economic Importance: Negative - White bryony is a vigorous perennial vine resembling Kudzu in its habit. This plant forms dense mats which shade out all vegetation it grows upon. White bryony's major destructive potential is to native vegetation, forest communities, and urban horticulture. When established this plant can shade out mature trees, eventually killing them. Wildlife habitat is also negatively impacted by bryony patches. A decrease in wildlife nesting, roosting and protection can be expected from trees covered with white bryony.



Historical and current uses: White bryony has been associated with the plant that has the property of averting lightning. Caesar wore a wreath of white bryony to protect himself from lightning during thunderstorms. Tarchon, the founder of the theurgism, planted a hedge of white bryony to protect his home from lightning.

In the 14th century this herb was known to be used as a treatment for leprosy. John Gerard, 16th-century botanist recommended its use for leather tanning, while the 18th century botanist William Withering, advocated white bryony's use in veterinary medicine. White Bryony extract has been known to have anti-tumoral properties. White Bryony is currently used to treat gastrointestinal, respiratory, and rheumatic disorders. White bryony is used to treat coughs, flu, violent headaches, and other acute conditions that develop slowly. Extracts of bryony is effective to treat for inflammation in the lining of the joints, chest, and abdomen, and is given for osteoarthritis, and rheumatism with joints that are painful and swollen. This herb is also used to treat pneumonia and pleurisy with severe chest pain, constipation, and colic. It also works in treating breastfeeding women experiencing swollen or painful breasts.



Bryony Root



White Bryony Covering Vegetation

Control Methods

Severing the vines is not feasible because the plant will grow back from the root.

Mechanical: This is the most effective type of control. In the fall when roots can be easily located, sever the roots 3 to 4 inches below the surface with a shovel. This removes the crown and prevents re-sprouting.

Chemical: This may be problematic if the bryony covers other vegetation that is desired. You could use gloves to pull the vines back away from the desired vegetation, cut the tuber and treat with metsulfuron-methyl or picloram.

**More information can be found in the
[PNW Weed Management Handbook](#)**

Use pesticides with care. Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

Biological: Currently none available

Questions: contact [Steve Van Vleet](#) or by phone, (509) 397-6290