

Kudzu



Kudzu [*Pueraria montana* (Lour.) Merr.] is a deciduous twining, trailing, mat-forming, woody leguminous vine 35 to 100 feet (10 to 30 m) that forms dense infestations along forest and roadside edges. Leaves have three leaflets with variable lobes. Slender tight clusters of white and violet pealike flowers appear in midsummer to yield clusters of dangling flat pods in fall. Pods fall unopened, and seed are variable in viability across the region. Colonizes by vines rooting at nodes, and spreads by wind-, animal-, and water-dispersed seeds. Large semiwoody tuberous roots with no vine buds reach depths of 3 to 16 feet (1 to 5 m), while the target of control on older plants is a knot- or ball-like root crown on top of the soil surface where vines and roots originate.

Management strategies:

- Do not plant. Remove prior plantings, and control sprouts and seedlings. Bag and dispose of plants and seed pods in a dumpster or burn.
- Treat when new plants are young to prevent spread.
- Anticipate wider occupation when plants are present before disturbance.
- Root crowns can be removed with mattocks, hoes, and saws, while removal of the tuberous taproot is not required for control.
- Mow and then cover for 2 years with plastic sheeting firmly fastened down to gain partial control.
- Repeated multiyear cutting to groundline can achieve control over many years.
- Prescribed burning in spring can clear debris, sever climbing vines, and reveal hazards before summer applications. Repeated burns will not control. Burns are hot especially in winter.
- Tender new shoots are readily eaten by cattle, hogs, and horses, while only goats and sheep will eat semiwoody and woody vines. Prescribed grazing can reduce infestations over several years while pine tree planting in latter years can yield a fully stocked plantation with minimal kudzu.

Recommended control procedures:

- Thoroughly wet all leaves, including those on climbing vines, as high as possible with one of the following herbicides in water with a surfactant: (June to October for successive years when regrowth appears) Tordon 101*[‡] as a 3-percent solution (12 ounces per 3-gallon mix) or Tordon K*[‡] as a 2-percent solution (8 ounces per 3-gallon mix), either by broadcast or spot spray; (July to early September for successive years) Escort XP* at 3 to 4 ounces per acre (0.8 to 1.2 dry ounces per 3-gallon mix) or Milestone VM* at 7 ounces per acre (2 ounces per 3-gallon mix) in water. When safety to surrounding vegetation is desired, use Transline*[†] as a 0.5-percent solution in water (2 ounces per 3-gallon mix) or Milestone VM* can safely treat kudzu under many desirable trees and shrubs if herbicide is not applied directly to them.
- For partial control and no soil activity, repeatedly apply Garlon 4 or a glyphosate herbicide as a 4-percent solution in water (1 pint per 3-gallon mix) with a surfactant during the growing season. Or cut large vines and immediately apply the herbicides to the cut surfaces or apply the ready-to-use Pathway* or ORTHO Brush-B-Gon, Enforcer Brush Killer, and Vine-X readily available in retail garden stores (safe to surrounding plants). ORTHO Brush-B-Gon, Enforcer Brush and other "poison ivy" herbicides can be used as foliar sprays.
- To control vines less than 2 inches in diameter, apply basal sprays of Garlon 4 as a 20-percent solution (5 pints per 3-gallon mix) in a labeled basal oil product, vegetable oil, kerosene, or diesel fuel (where permitted) (January to April); or use undiluted Pathfinder II.
- For larger vines, make stem injections using Tordon 101*[‡], Stalker*, Arsenal AC*, or a glyphosate herbicide using dilutions and cut-spacings specified on the herbicide label (anytime except March and April).

* Nontarget plants may be killed or injured by root uptake.

[‡] When using Tordon herbicides, rainfall must occur within 6 days after application for needed soil activation. Tordon herbicides are restricted use pesticides.

[†] Transline controls a narrow spectrum of plant species.