

# Dodder

*Cuscuta Spp.*

Morningglory/Dodder Family

## Key identifying traits

- ❑ Numerous yellow to orange thread-like stems that coil around and attach to host plants
- ❑ Leaves are not readily apparent
- ❑ Roots only present until attachment to host
- ❑ Produces numerous clustered inconspicuous white to pink flowers in late summer
- ❑ Seeds are small, oval, gray to red and 1/25" in length-there are 2-4 seeds per capsule



## Biology and ecology

- An annual parasitic plant with no green parts
- Seeds germinate on the soil surface and develop small root systems & 2-4" stems
- Attaches to host plants with wart-like suckers and must do so within a few days of germination or die
- Once attached, the root system disappears and the plant becomes wholly parasitic, extracting water and nutrients from host
- Many broadleaf plants serve as host, particularly alfalfa and clover
- Can produce over 16,000 seeds per plant that can remain viable for over 60 years



## Control

*Prevention* - Learn to identify plants; know your property; beware of fill dirt, hay and seed from outside your area

*Biological* - None known at this time

*Cultural* - Rotating to non-host crops, vegetables or ornamentals in affected areas is effective

*Mechanical* - Physical removal of new small infestations prior to reproduction is often effective

*Chemical*- Some effective at label rates, but injury to host plants must be acceptable



**Where found** -Common in old alfalfa fields through much of the U.S. including Stevens County. Occasionally found in gardens or ornamental plantings in the county.