

BLADDER CAMPION

Silene vulgaris



Overview:

This plant is often confused with white cockle and night flowering catchfly as the flowers are very similar, but bladder campion has smooth leaves and stems while the other two are very hairy. Introduced from Europe, bladder campion is a deep-rooted perennial plant, reproducing both by seed and vegetatively by sprouting from lateral branches of its deep taproot. Severed root pieces can produce new plants.

Habitat:

Bladder campion occurs in medium to coarse soils in well-drained locations. It is common in pastures, waste places, roadsides, open woods, gardens, lawns and hedges, but is rather uncommon in regularly cultivated fields.

Identification:

Stems: Stems are 30 - 60 cm high, erect or spreading, smooth, light green to whitish with a waxy bloom (fine powdery coating) and usually swollen at the nodes.

Leaves: Leaves are opposite (2 per node), narrowly oval, tapered, deep green or whitish with a waxy bloom, the margins without teeth but occasionally wavy or curled and appearing toothed.

Flowers and Fruit:

Flowers in branching clusters. The sepals are united and forming a bladder-like calyx that is light green, or pinkish with darker green or purplish veins and 5 very short teeth at the end. There are five white to pinkish petals, deeply lobed, about 1.5 cm across when open, soon curling up and shriveling after pollination. The seedpods are nearly spherical, about 6 mm long, enclosed by the loose, papery, bladder-like calyx. The seeds are grayish, kidney-shaped, 1.5 mm across, rough with tiny warty bumps. Flowers from mid-June to September.

Roots: The root system is a course, whitish taproot with numerous, deeply penetrating and widely spreading wiry branches, very persistent (tolerant of cultivation).

Seeds: One plant may produce as many as 20,000 seeds.

Prevention:

Insisting on the purity of purchased seed and forage will prevent this plant's spread onto both private and public lands.

Control:

Grazing: Not grazed. *Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.*

Cultivation: Cultivation can be effective as long as it's deep enough to cut the roots off below the root crown and must be repeated for at least two seasons. Care must be taken not to transport root pieces that could start new infestations elsewhere.

Mechanical: Frequent mowing to prevent seed production can help contain an existing infestation.

Chemical: Some herbicide resistance has been encountered in bladder campion; however, spot applications of other products are still effective. Consult your local Agricultural Field- man or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date.

