

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Old man’s beard
Clematis vitalba

Other common names: Traveler’s joy

USDA symbol: CLVI6
ODA rating: B



Introduction: This European native was introduced to North America as an ornamental plant and has since rapidly spread throughout western Oregon especially in the north end of the Willamette Valley. Robust vines readily climb trees facilitating tree damage during ice storms. Distinguishing this species with our native Clematis is often difficult due to variations between individual plants.

Distribution in Oregon: Old man’s beard is a pest in western Oregon especially at the north end of the Willamette Valley. Satellite populations now occur in river drainages from the Umpqua northward.

Description: Old man’s beard is a perennial, woody deciduous vine often growing up to thirty yards long. The leaves are opposite and compound, usually with five leaflets. Flowers are small, greenish white and found in clusters in the upper leaf axils. The characteristic feathery seed heads give this climber its name. Vines root with sustained ground contact creating dense horizontal growth in riparian forests.

Impacts: Old man’s beards capacity to spread is high due to its reproductive potential and excellent dispersal methods. Reproduction is mainly by seeds; transported by wind, water or animals. Vine fragments also root when adequate season-long moisture is available. In areas where it has naturalized, dense growth blankets shrubs and tall native trees. Once a tree collapses, the plant continues to grow along the ground in layers several feet thick, preventing native plant regeneration below it. Habitat for Clematis includes river margins, roadsides, gardens, hedges, and forest edges.

Biological controls: No approved biological control agents are available at this time.

