

“B” Rated Weeds

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

Herb Robert

Geranium robertianum

Other common names: Herb Robert, Robert geranium, Stinky Bob, Red Robin, Fox geranium

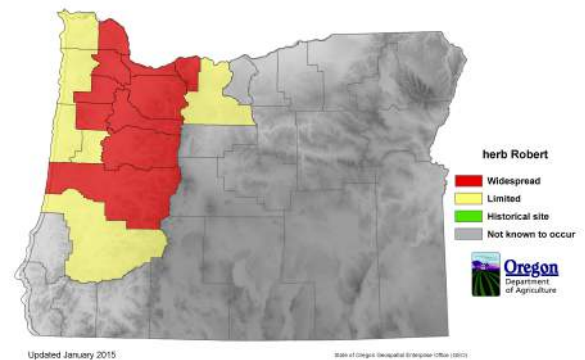
USDA symbol: GERO

ODA rating: B



Introduction: This common forest species has its origins throughout Eurasia and North Africa. It has rapidly invaded the Pacific Northwest since the early 80's growing in shaded to semi-shaded environments frequently invading land previously cleared of English ivy. It has a strong smell of diesel and mint when walked through. Historical records indicate that several traditional remedies for cancer, toe, and fingernail maladies, toothache, dysentery, and nosebleed have been derived from Herb Robert.

Distribution in Oregon: Herb Robert primarily inhabits forestlands on the west side of the Cascade Range and is reported to successfully invade the drier oak and brush habitat on the eastern Columbia River Gorge. It can be expected to establish in moist areas of eastern Oregon.



Description: Herb Robert is a branching, low growing winter and spring annual. Its light green leaves are deeply dissected and release a pungent odor making this plant easy to recognize. As the plants mature the foliage turns red. The stems are highly pubescent, have multiple forks, and are brittle at the joints. The roots are shallow allowing for easy hand removal. The pink flowers are five petaled. Herb Robert reproduces only by seeds. Flowers are usually self-fertile creating uniform populations. Seeds are matured in elongated pointed capsules that eject up to 20 feet when disturbed. Herb Robert tolerates a wide range of light intensities thriving best in open canopied forests or along the edges of forests. It can be highly competitive with native early spring forbs but less so against grasses. Often Herb Robert takes advantage of habitats that have been opened up through weed control activities such as English ivy or false brome removal.

Impacts: Weedy geranium populations have expanded exponentially in the Pacific Northwest in the last twenty years. Today herb Robert is becoming one of the most common woodland invaders in Western Oregon. An annual weed with a high reproductive potential, it has barely begun to infest all potential acreage available to it. Regionally, the species has been dispersed mainly by human activities into many watersheds. Locally, it is spreading by water movement, wildlife, recreationalists, gardeners, and land disturbance activities. It can encroach up to 250 plants per meter square, pushing out native flora and impacting private gardens and parks. The full impacts of herb Robert invasion on flora, soil faunal communities, and pollinators have not been examined. Invasive populations in parks and garden settings will increase landscape maintenance costs. Except in some ecologically significant locations, regional observations of infestations do not indicate that it is currently a serious ecological threat.

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

