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# Lowbush Blueberry Fact Sheet

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## Spreading Dogbane

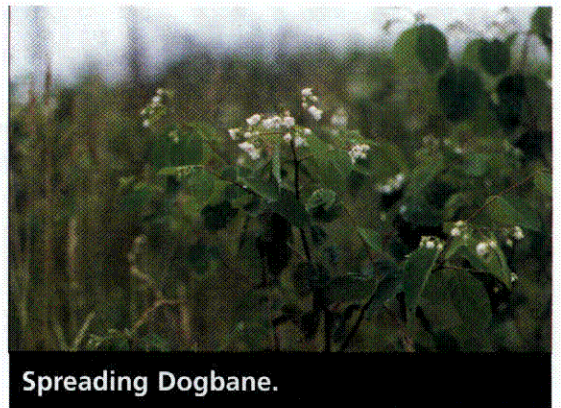
*Apocynum androsaemifolium* L.

Other names: Wandering milkweed, rheumatism-wood, honey bloom, milk weed.

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### Description

Spreading dogbane is a perennial herb that reproduces by seed and spreading rhizomes. The smooth, slender, reddish stems can be erect or inclined and branched in upper portions. Its height ranges from 20 to 75 cm. The opposite leaves, which tend to droop on short stalks, are oblong to ovate in shape. The upper surface of the leaves range in colour from bright to dark green, while the underside of the leaves are a lighter to a whitish green. Young leaves are also this distinctive whitish green. The pale pinkish-white flowers, found in branched clusters, form in the upper leaf axils and are bell shaped with five outward curving lobes. Seed pods are distinctively pencil-like and are usually found in pairs. The milky juice found throughout all parts of the plant is a very distinguishable characteristic.



Spreading Dogbane.

### Economic Importance

Spreading dogbane is not often seen in lowbush blueberry fields, however it is a very serious weed and should be controlled very quickly. It is generally found on sandy or light soils and grows in patches which spread rapidly. It out-competes the lowbush blueberry for resources like space, moisture, nutrients and sunlight. Also, spreading dogbane produces chemicals which discourage neighbouring plant growth \*(allelopathy).

### Life Cycle

Spreading dogbane is a perennial herb that reproduces by seed and spreading rhizomes. It spreads quickly in sandy light soils choking out most other plant species. Spreading dogbane emerges in the late spring and produces flowers from July through August. Each flower produces two pods which contain many small seeds. These seeds have tufts of white fibre which allow for easy wind dispersal.





# Control Strategy

The lowbush blueberry pruning cycle is not an effective control method as it may encourage rhizome growth and plant expansion. However, repeated cuttings of the spreading dogbane patches throughout the year, preceded by directed herbicide applications, may result in effective control of the weed.



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