

Bladder Campion

Silene cucubalus

Description:

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. 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.

Stems are erect, smooth and hairless, growing up to 50 cm tall. There are several branching stems per plant, forming clumps. Stems are swollen where leaves attach (nodes).

Leaves are lance shaped, waxy, and very variable in size – 3-8 cm, attaching to stems in opposite pairs. Leaves have a distinctive center crease.

Flowers consist of 5 white petals that are deeply lobed or split, and occur in clusters at the ends of stems. The base of the flower (calyx) becomes inflated (bladder-like), veiny and purplish brown as the plant matures. The calyx terminates at the flower with 5 short, triangular teeth.



Control

Bladder campion will grow under a wide range of conditions, but prefers medium to coarse, well-drained soils. One plant may produce as many as 20,000 seeds.

Cultivation can be effective as long as it's deep enough to cut the roots off below the root crown. Care must be taken not to transport root pieces that could start new infestations elsewhere. Mowing to prevent seed production can help contain an existing infestation.

Some herbicide resistance has been encountered in Bladder campion, however spot applications of other products are still effective.



Hayfields are a frequent habitat of this invasive plant – compounding the problem as weed seed gets distributed in baled forage, or via the manure of grazing animals. Insisting on the purity of purchased seed and forage will prevent this plant's spread onto both private and public lands.