

## Time to Control Bindweed

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

I'm sure that most people drive down the street and see traffic, pedestrians, houses and maybe trees and lawns. I'm not normal (what else is new??) When I drive down the street I'm seeing a fescue lawn that is being mowed too short. I'm seeing an American Elm tree with early signs of Dutch Elm Disease and a pine tree starting to get that gray green look indicating pine wilt disease. I see another lawn that is really loaded up with crabgrass and foxtail. In between all of this I'm hopefully watching for traffic and pedestrians! Other people see green growing things, I see very specific green growing things.

Something I've been seeing a lot of lately, especially since all the rain earlier this month, is a plant called field bindweed. Field bindweed is a perennial vine. It freezes back to the ground in the late fall and then starts growing vigorously in mid spring. It will cover a fence or part of a yard. When it starts to bloom it has a plethora of white blossoms, often first starting out a a very pale pink color. It is really an attractive plant when it's in full bloom.

Here's the real problem. Field bindweed is a noxious weed. It can be very aggressive and literally take over parts of lawns, fields or pastures if left unchecked. It has a massive root system that allows it to survive and thrive during periods of heat and drought. If the drought lasts too long it can choose to go dormant only to return with vigor once cooler weather and rain return. While twenty years of Roundup Ready crops have helped to reduce this weed in some crop fields, in pastures, waste areas and yards, it is still thriving. Lawns I drove by in recent weeks showed abundant new growth taking advantage of all the rain we had received. In a few lawns it looked like every blade of grass was being entwined with a bindweed vine.

Occasionally homeowners want to try to control this weed through non-chemical means. In yards, I don't really know if that is practical. In gardens and flowerbeds you can get control by pulling or hoeing off the vines but it requires several years of diligence and patience. When you pull or hoe off a bindweed vine it starts to regrow from a dormant bud. As the new growth emerges from below ground it takes a couple of weeks before it develops enough leaf area to provide adequate photosynthesis to not only provide food for it's own growth but to replace the food reserves in the roots that it was growing on. Once the new growth emerges you need to wait two weeks before cutting off the regrowth. This helps reduce food reserves in the roots so you can eventually starve the plant to death. But you have to be diligent and it may take several years to control a well established plant.

Fortunately we do have some selective herbicide controls to deal with bindweed. Fall is a great time of year to initiate control as bindweed is busy moving food reserves to the root so the herbicides are readily taken up and translocated to the roots where they can do the most damage. In gardens or flower beds, where you can pull the vines away from desirable plants, glyphosate is probably the best choice. In yards, just about any of the dandelion type control herbicides are effective against bindweed. You can spray anytime now, or even well into October or November. Interestingly, once of the newer products that we use for post emerge crabgrass control, quinclorac, is very effective against bindweed. Look for the lawn weed control products that include crabgrass control and have quinclorac on the label. If you use one of these, do not use grass clippings from that part of the lawn for mulch in your garden as it may damage garden plants.