

“B” Rated Weeds

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

Kochia
Kochia scoparia

Other common names: Fireweed, Mexican fireweed,
summer cypress, burning bush, mock cypress

USDA symbol: KOSC
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Kochia was introduced to the U.S. around 1900 as an ornamental from Eurasia. Its bright red foliage in the fall attracts gardener’s attention. Certain strains are grown as a forage crop for sheep and cattle having a high protein content in its early stages.

Distribution in Oregon: Kochia is one of the most widely established weed species in the dryer parts of the state.

Description: Kochia is a fast-growing annual supported by a deep taproot and will grow up to six feet tall. Stems are many branched, round, slender and often red-tinged late in the season. Leaves ½ to two inches long, alternate, flat, lance-shaped with margins fringed with hairs. Flower heads are green, petal-less, inconspicuous spikes in the axils of upper leaves. It blooms from July to October. Kochia has been used in Chinese and Korean folk medicine as treatment of skin diseases, diabetes, mellitus, rheumatoid arthritis, liver disorders, and jaundice.

Impacts: Kochia is a highly adaptable plant that invades a wide variety of habitats in the dryer portions of Oregon. It thrives on pasture, rangeland, roadsides, ditch banks, wastelands and cultivated fields. It provides a significant challenge to right-of-way maintenance professionals because of its ability to rapidly develop resistance to many herbicides. The species has been reported to reduce crop yields in cereal grain by 100% in severe infestations. It is an effective competitor to light, nutrients, and soil moisture. It is also an alternate host for beet yellows and tobacco mosaic virus. Kochia produces about 14,600 seeds per plant. Seeds are dispersed in the fall when the plant tumbles.

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

