

Florida Betony (Stachys Floridana)

In the late fall and winter the Cooperative Extension office begins receiving many calls about a hard to control perennial weed called Florida Betony. The weed emerges in the fall and becomes a severe lawn problem as winter progresses. Florida Betony is a perennial weed that is very difficult to control. It can be recognized by the white to tan tuber found in the soil beneath the plant and by the square stems and white, pink or blue flowers. This tuber resembles a fat grub or a rattlesnake rattle. You must dig down to find the tuber, as it will break off from the plant when you try to pull it out of the ground.



The best way to control Florida Betony is through sanitation. Check all nursery plants and sod before you plant them in your yard. Do not plant anything that contains signs of Florida Betony. Scout both your property and the edges of your yard regularly to check for Florida Betony. The underground rhizomes can spread quite rapidly, so early detection and eradication are essential.



In landscape beds the only selective herbicide that truly controls this weed is diclobenil. However, this herbicide also will kill or severely damage herbaceous ornamentals, newly planted woody ornamentals, and some established plants. Therefore, follow label directions very carefully, apply only in the winter, and apply only around established ornamentals that are not listed on the label as susceptible. Another option is Glyphosate, which may be applied as a spot treatment. Glyphosate may be somewhat effective, but repeated applications are necessary. Remember that Glyphosate will damage or kill desirable plants as well, so follow label directions and avoid any spray drift.

Florida Betony becomes a problem in lawns as well as in ornamental beds, and is especially problematic in centipedegrass and St. Augustine grass. For Centipede and St. Augustine, Florida Betony may be controlled using atrazine or a combination of atrazine + bentazon. Apply these now (fall) and reapply in mid-winter to early spring. Read and follow all label directions, especially noting ornamentals that may be damaged if you apply the product around their root zones. For other lawns, postemergent broadleaf herbicides containing 2,4D + MCPP + dicamba, or clopyralid + triclopyr, provide some control, but note that these herbicide combinations cannot be used on all grasses. Read the label carefully to make sure the product you are buying can safely be used on your type of lawn, and make sure to follow all directions regarding time and manner of application.

Anticipate that it will take at least two years of treatment to eradicate established areas of Florida Betony from your lawn or ornamental beds. In the meantime, remove all new Florida Betony plants as soon as you notice them. Take special care to remove the underground



tubers. A little care now to prevent the establishment and spread of this weed will save you a great deal of headache, time and money to control a larger infestation in the future.



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