

If you would like weed identification, site-specific control recommendations or additional noxious weed information, contact the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program.



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Board 2015

P.O. Box 1634 / 62 Henry Road #26  
Eastsound, WA 98245  
(360) 376-3499

*info@sanjuanweeds.org*

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## Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*)

Class B noxious weed

(Control encouraged but not  
required )



Credit: Ben Legler, University of Washington

### About Herb Robert:

Herb Robert is a low-growing, shade-tolerant geranium described as a winter or spring annual, a biennial and even as a short-lived perennial. Its bright green, deeply lobed fern-like leaves are similar to those of Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa*). The foliage of the two plants can easily be distinguished from each other by looking at their stems. Herb Robert stems are covered with white hairs, while those of Bleeding Heart are smooth and hairless. These glandular hairs, when crushed, give herb Robert its distinctive odor, and thus its common name 'Stinky Bob'.

Herb Robert reproduces solely by seed. New seedlings appear throughout the growing season and into early winter. Each flower produces five seeds capable of being ejected as far as 20 feet from the parent plant. Connected to the seed is a sticky thread that adheres to leaves, fur, shoes, clothing, and equipment.

### Why Control Herb Robert:

Herb Robert will establish and proliferate in pristine forest communities, becoming the dominant ground cover, capable of taking over up to 90% of the forest floor, and displacing herbaceous natives. It is spreading rapidly into forested natural areas in western Washington from sea level to about 4,000 feet. The National Park Conservation Association states that, of the approximately 186 non-native plant species inhabiting the Olympic National Park, this species is one of the worst invasive offenders.

### Tools for Herb Robert removal:

- thin pair of gloves
- plastic bag

## Herb Robert Control

### By law, herbicides must be used in strict accordance with label instructions.

*Research on effective and safe herbicide use is on-going and often contradictory. For more recent information contact the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program .*

Early detection and rapid response, is the most effective strategy in preventing high impact weed infestations, such as those by Herb Robert. Keep clean areas clean by removing small isolated patches and outlying individual plants.

**Mechanical:** Herb Robert can be controlled by eliminating seed production. Although it is easy to pull, the stem is brittle at its base, breaking easily and allowing the highly branched roots to remain embedded in the soil. To prevent its reflowering, remove the entire root structure by grasping it by the crown. Avoid spreading seeds by bagging the plants as they are pulled and remaining aware that the seeds can adhere to clothing.

**Chemical:** Although herbicides will kill Herb Robert, it is difficult to chemically control this noxious weed without damaging surrounding plants.

**Biological:** All known insects that attack Herb Robert also attack other ornamental and native geraniums, thus making biological controls unavailable in Washington State.

### What to do with the remains:

Since Herb Robert can set seed after it has been pulled from the ground, It is necessary to bag the entire plant and discard it in the trash.

### Ground cover alternatives:

For Information on native and non-invasive ornamentals, contact the WSU Master Gardeners (378-4414) or your local plant nursery.



Credit: SJCNWCB

Herb Robert, showing leaves, crown and root