



Bladder Champion

(Silene cucubalus)

Provincial Designation: None

Overview:

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. Introduced from Europe, bladder campion is 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.

Habitat:

Bladder campion will grow under a wide range of conditions, but prefers medium to coarse, well-drained soils.



Identification:

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

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

Flowers: 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 purpleish brown as the plant matures. The calyx terminates at the flower with 5 short, triangular teeth.

Seed: One plant may produce as many as 20,000 seeds.

Prevention:

Insisting on the purity of purchased seed and forage will prevent this plant's spread onto both private and public lands.

Control:

Grazing: Not grazed. *Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.*

Cultivation: Cultivation can be effective as long as it's deep enough to cut the roots off below the root crown and must be repeated for at least two seasons. Care must be taken not to transport root pieces that could start new infestations elsewhere.

Mechanical: Frequent mowing to prevent seed production can help contain an existing infestation.



Chemical:¹ Some herbicide resistance has been encountered in bladder campion, however spot applications of other products are still effective. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date.

¹ Always follow the product labels. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the *Minor Use of Pesticides* regulation constitutes an offence under both the *Federal Pest Control Products Act* and *Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.