

Crown Vetch (*Coronilla varia*)

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**Exotic
 Invasive**

DESCRIPTION:

Crown vetch is a herbaceous perennial in the Legume family, originally from Europe, southeast Asia and northern Africa. This species spreads primarily vegetatively by a spreading root system (rhizomes) that can grow to 10 ft long. For this reason this species has been frequently used as a ground cover for erosion control and as a green fertilizer crop. Crown vetch is often seen along roads and waterways planted as a bank stabilizer. However, due to their limited root system crown vetch is actually a poor choice for slope stabilization and can accelerate erosion. This species quickly spreads into adjacent habitats with full sun to partial shade and many soil types, displacing desirable vegetation. Crown vetch seeds can remain viable for over 15 years and seem to spread readily around the landscape.

IDENTIFICATION:

Crown vetch is typically a ground cover but can grow to a height of up to 2 ft with trailing hairless stems that can reach over 3 feet long. The leaves have 15-25 pairs of pinnately compound leaflets with a prominent mid-vein below and a single leaflet on the end of the central rib. The leaflets have no leaf stalks and range in length from 0.5 to 2 inches. The flower clusters are a pinkish-lavender to white color that bloom May- August. The flower cluster looks similar to a crown which gives this plant its common name.



CONTROL METHODS:

Organic: When found in fire adapted communities, repeated prescribed burning in late spring has been effective at controlling this species. Mowing repeatedly for several years in June and late August can also control this species as well as hand pulling in smaller infestations.

Chemical: As with many weeds in the legume family, aminopyralid (Milestone®) & clopyralid (Transline®) are two broadleaf specific herbicides suggested for treatment of this species. Reference herbicide labels for specific application rate recommendations. Though less effective, glyphosate (Roundup®, etc.) can be used for foliar application. Glyphosate is non-selective and should be used with caution to prevent harm of non-target species. These treatments may need to be done for several years to fully eliminate the crown vetch colony. The best time to treat crown vetch is just as it begins to flower.

Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Since this is a full-sun weed we recommend a diverse selection of prairie species to replace and compete against crown vetch in order to develop a more stable and productive plant community for the site. Contact us for specific recommendations.

