

Deadnettle (*Lamium spp.*)

DESCRIPTION:

Deadnettle are a group of species and varieties of species in the *Lamium* genus. These annual and perennial mints were introduced from Europe and western Asia as ornamental ground covers. Unfortunately they are a little too good at covering the ground, and spread aggressively wherever they are planted, often entering and overwhelming natural areas. They can even be a weed of row crops. They are poisonous to livestock causing the animal to stagger. Each plant can produce 200 seeds allowing this species to spread rapidly both by vegetative runners and by seed.

-3
Aggressive
Weed

IDENTIFICATION:

Dead nettle tends to form mats over the ground with individual spikes to 16". The oppositely arranged leaves tend to have more of a purple tinge to them as they get higher on the plant, though some varieties have variegated leaves. The pale pink to dark purple flowers are also stalkless appearing in whorled clusters of 6-10 on the upper leaves. Deadnettles can often be confused with their close cousin yellow archangel though this species has yellow flowers. Yellow archangel is also an invasive weed, so land managers need not make a distinction.

CONTROL METHODS:

Organic: Digging is effective for small populations (of a few square yards), since plants pull up easily in moist soil. Care should be taken to remove all of the root mass and runners. If the plants are flowering or developing seeds they should be bagged and disposed of in the trash to prevent seed dispersal.

For populations that are too large for hand pulling, using a mower or weed whip to obliterate the plants late in their flowering period will reduce seed production. Smothering or heet mulching may be another option, if the entire colony can be covered at the same time.

Due to their shallow root system, yellow archangel are intolerant of fire, so repeated prescribed burns or flame weeding can reduce the density of this species. Prescribed burns and the clearing of invasive brush and aggressive trees invigorate our native plants which allows them to better compete with the yellow archangel.

Chemical: A foliar application of glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) can be sprayed in late fall after most native species have gone dormant or in early spring before native species have become active again. The temperature should be above 45 degrees, and there should not be rain in the forecast for at least 12 hours after treatment. For large monocultures this same treatment can be used any time of year.

Herbicides containing triclopyr such as Garlon® 4, Garlon® 3A (for wetland areas) or an appropriate Weed-B-Gon® formulation can be used where there is a risk of injuring sedges or grasses.

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

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

For ground covers in shade, look to wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), rosy sedge (*Carex rosea*), great waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum appendiculatum*) Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) or wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*). Virginia Waterleaf can be somewhat aggressive, so it is best used in contained locations. Overall, a diverse mix of native perennials is the best replacement for a patch of deadnettle.

