

# Stickseed (*Hackelia virginiana*)

**-1  
Minor  
Pest**

## DESCRIPTION:

Also known as beggar's lice, sticktight or wild comfrey, stickseed is native to eastern North America and an herbaceous biennial of the Borage family. It is commonly found in degraded woodlands, fencerows, thickets and shady trail-sides. It especially thrives in disturbed woodlands that have been over-grazed, becoming abundant. This species is native to our region and does provide a nectar source for pollinators, which can be scarce in low-quality woodlands. However, the seeds cling to, and are quickly distributed by mammal fur, bird feathers, and clothing of humans, making it a pest.

## IDENTIFICATION:

Stickseed is a biennial plant and forms a rosette during its first year of growth. These first-year leaves are broad, glossy and heart-shaped, most similar to violets in appearance, but larger and with a smooth leaf margin. The second year plants typically grow from 2'-3' tall, but can reach up to 4'. Stems and leaves are covered with short, stiff hairs. Leaves are dark, glossy, lanceolate shaped with smooth margins. Tiny white flowers bloom in late summer on horizontal stalks. These develop into spherical fruits or nutlets with dense prickles covering the outer surface. The clingy seeds may attach to you individually, or sometimes entire stems will break off with a row of seeds attached to your pants or your pet.

## CONTROL METHODS:

**Organic:** This plant can be dug or pulled out in loose soil if the population is small enough. Make sure that all of the root fragments are removed. You can weed-whip or cut down second year plants during the flowering stage to prevent seed development, though multiple mowings may be necessary to prevent reproduction entirely.

**Chemical:** Careful spot-applications of glyphosate (Roundup®, etc.) or triclopyr (Garlon®, etc.) are the easiest and most effective means of control. Triclopyr is a broadleaf-specific herbicide and won't harm grasses or sedges. Be carefully not to 'overspray' and harm neighboring, desirable plants. It is best to apply herbicide to the smaller first-year plants before they have a chance to bolt.

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

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

**NOTE:** Stay on, and keep pets on, established roads and trails to prevent weed seed dispersal. Clean off shoes and clothes of any seeds before traveling to other locations and dispose of the seeds in the trash.



1st year plant rosette



Leaves of 2nd year plant