

Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

DESCRIPTION:

Motherwort is a perennial, herbaceous plant in the mint family (Lamiaceae). Originally from Eurasia, it has been spread worldwide due to its use as a medicinal herb, used particularly for ailments of the heart, nervous system and a variety of issues related to childbirth. It is sold by nurseries as a commercial herb, which has no doubt accelerated its rate of spread in the midwest. Motherwort can be found in sunny or shaded places, often in highly disturbed sites. It is becoming particularly common and problematic in many woodland sites.

-3
Agressive
Weed

IDENTIFICATION:

Motherwort is usually 2-4' tall with a heavily ridged square stem. The leaves are oppositely arranged along the stem, and though the shape is variable they tend to have 3 or 5 sharply-pointed lobes. The edges of the leaves are also deeply toothed and the veins are conspicuous along the upper surface of the leaves. Flowers are located immediately above where the leaf stalks meet the stem, circling the stem in a whorl. The small, tubular, lavender flowers are generally hairy or fuzzy which bloom from June through August. The seeds are born in spiny burs that can be irritating or caught in clothing or, in particular, animal fur.

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.

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. Herbicide should be sprayed on the leaves of the plant uniformly, assuring that the entire leaf surface is covered, but without excess herbicide dripping off. These treatments may need to be repeated for several years to eliminate new plants sprouting from the weed bank. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use.

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

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Since motherwort prefers wood edges and less shaded spots, we recommend using a savanna seed or diverse prairie seed mix to compete to develop a more stable and productive plant community for the site. Contact us for specific recommendations.

