

# Please call 1-866-invader if you suspect you have found this species

## Kudzu

*Pueraria montana* var. *lobata*

## Other common names:

USDA symbol: PUMOL

ODA rating: A and T



**Introduction:** Kudzu was introduced to the United States in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the exposition the Japanese government constructed a beautiful garden filled with plants native to Japan. The large leaves and sweet-smelling blossoms of kudzu captured the desires of American gardeners who introduced the plant as an ornamental. The biggest distribution occurred later during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the Soil Conservation Service promoted kudzu for erosion control in the South only to later declare it a noxious weed.

**Distribution in Oregon:** Four kudzu sites have been identified in the Pacific Northwest, three from Oregon, one in Washington State. Prior to 2000, kudzu was not found west of Texas. Since 2000 all sites have received intensive treatment with eradication probable.

**Description:** This aggressive high-climbing vine often completely covers trees, shrubs and man-made structure forming “kudzu sculptures”. Vines may extend thirty to one hundred feet with stems ranging from one half to four inches in diameter. Up to thirty vines may grow from a single root crown. The deciduous leaves are alternate, six to eight inches long, have fuzzy leaflets three to four inches long, oval, lobed or nearly heart shaped. Purple to red colored pea-like flowers appear in mid-summer, form large hanging clusters, and have a pleasant grape-like odor. Fruit are dark brown flattened pods born in clusters, very hairy and ripening in the fall. Young stems are velvety covered in brown hairs, older stems and vines turn brown and smooth eventually forming a fine scaly bark. The roots form a fleshy taproot often seven inches or more in diameter, six feet or more in length and weighing as much as four hundred pounds.

**Impacts:** Kudzu kills or degrades native and desirable plants by smothering them under a solid blanket of leaves, and by the sheer force of its weight breaking branches or uprooting entire trees and shrubs. Trees covered by kudzu often become damaged during ice events or die from insufficient light. Once established kudzu grows at a rapid rate extending as much as 60 feet per season at a rate of about one foot per day. Control costs especially on powerline and road right-of-ways are high as is the cost to private landowners removing it in private forestlands and on farmlands. Since those initial introductions in the late 1800’s, kudzu has since become a major noxious weed impacting millions of acres.

**Biological controls:** No approved biocontrol agent is available. Kudzu is targeted for eradication when found.

