Do you know this smothering weed?

Recently, ECHO East Africa Regional Impact Center Director Erwin Kinsey and Technical Research Coordinator Bob Hargrave received a request from an ECHO network member to identify and propose control methods for a "new weed that is spreading and smothering trees and hedges."

From images submitted (see Figure 4), the weed was identified as dodder, a *Cuscuta* species that parasitizes many crops, native plants, and weeds. Most of the information available addresses crop plants in fields; the main recommendation is to use clean, certified seed to prevent infestation.

Figure 4. Weed photo sent in with a request for identification and management information. *Photo: Roger, ECHO Network Member*

For situations where it is spreading on trees and hedges, some recommendations include:

- Remove and destroy (burn) as much of the plant as possible before it sets seed.
- Possibly burn it in place with a flame weeder or other such apparatus (but be careful!).
- Don't let livestock graze and spread seeds.
- Keep an eye out for new plants and remove them as soon as possible.

Erwin Kinsey commented, "Dodder is all over Arusha and Nairobi, and spreading in rural areas. Mechanical removal at an early stage is what we do in our garden, and we [encourage] any farmer whom we meet who has it, to do the same. Its early removal before it becomes effectively attached to its host is important."

For additional helpful information about dodder, including control of its spread, see these documents from Infonet-Biovision (http://www.infonet-biovision.org/PlantHealth/Pests/Dodder (http://www.infonet-biovision.org/PlantHealth/Pests/Dodder)) and the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management Program (http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7496.html (http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7496.html)).

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