

Small Broomrape *Orobanche minor* Sm.

Primary Hosts

Red clover, alfalfa, white clover, carrot, crimson clover.

Description

Small broomrape is a parasitic plant. It is an herbaceous, fleshy annual that lacks all chlorophyll. The plant is 6-20 inches tall, with a yellowish-brown unbranched stem with a purplish tint. Leaves are reduced in size and not obvious. Flowers vary in color from white to pink to purple to yellow, and open shortly after plant emergence. Seeds are extremely tiny and are produced in profusion.



Photo: Portland Bird Observatory and Field Centre



Photo: Oregon Department of Agriculture

Life cycle

Plants germinate from seed and remain below ground, accumulating resources from host plants, from January to May. Broomrape parasitizes the host plants, feeding upon nutrients and water from the host. Parasitized plants can be severely drained of resources, and crop failure may result. Next, the flowering stalk emerges, and viable seed is produced in as little as 3 weeks after emergence. Broomrape plant has the ability to produce up to 500,000 seeds that are dispersed by wind, water, and animals. If it is flowering, it will produce seeds even after it has been uprooted from site.

Current geographic distribution

Oregon, Washington, and much of the Eastern seaboard of the US.

Impact in Oregon

High. Clover broomrape poses a serious significant threat to Oregon agriculture, and precautions are necessary to prevent the spread of this noxious weed.