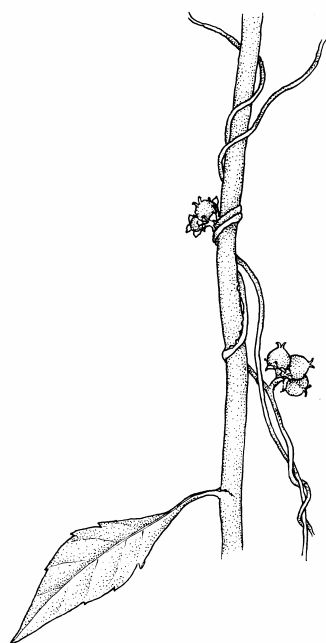


Buttonbush dodder (*Cuscuta cephalanthi*) **Dodder Family (Cuscutaceae)**

Plant Species of Concern

State rank: S2 (imperiled), Global rank: G5 (secure)



a dodder with seed capsules

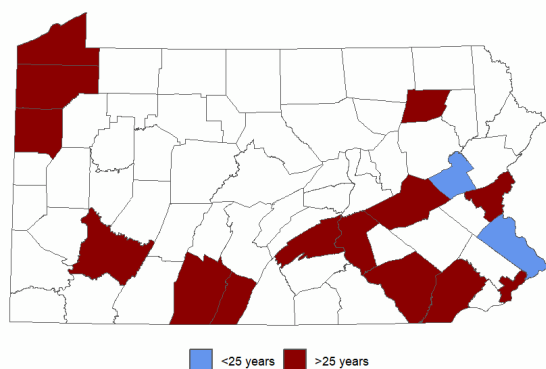
Description - Buttonbush dodder, like all the dodders, is a parasitic plant. The dodders have lost the ability to photosynthesize and instead obtain their food from other plants. When the seeds of these annual plants germinate in the spring, a pale yellowish stem emerges that soon wraps itself around the stem of another plant. Special structures called haustoria penetrate the host plant and absorb sugars and other photosynthetic products. Dodders do not contain chlorophyll, nor do they have leaves. Their slender stems form a cobwebby network of yellowish or orange strands over other plants. The small waxy, white flowers of dodder are produced in late summer and are followed by numerous spherical seed capsules. Ten species of dodder grow in Pennsylvania, telling them apart can be very challenging, even for an experienced botanist.

Habitat - Swamps, marshes, stream banks and moist thickets are where dodder is most likely to grow. Buttonbush dodder parasitizes a variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Range - The range of Buttonbush dodder includes most of the United States from Maine to Washington State and south to Florida and New Mexico. It is known from scattered sites in southern and western counties in Pennsylvania. It is probably more common in the state than present records indicate. Because the dodders are hard to identify to species many people do not collect them.

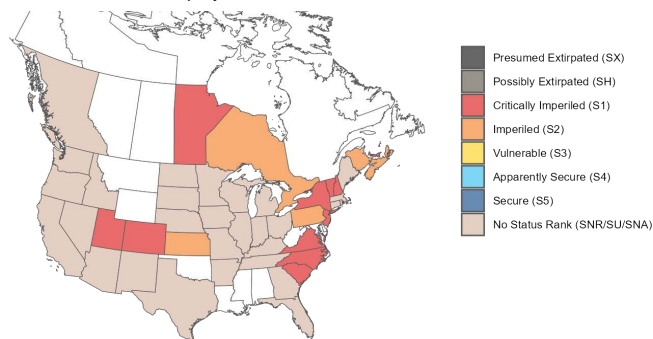
Traditional Uses - Referred to as "women without children", some species of dodder were eaten by Native American women as a contraceptive.

Button-bush Dodder (*Cuscuta cephalanthi*)



North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Management Issues - Buttonbush dodder does not require any special management. Flooding provides the natural disturbance that maintains appropriate habitat.

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)

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