



Yellow Clematis (*Clematis tangutica*)

Provincial Designation: Noxious

Overview:

Yellow clematis is a perennial vine of the buttercup family, native to high mountain areas of China and India. It reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from stem pieces. Vines grow rapidly either along the ground or will climb and cover other shrubs/trees, fences and trellises. It is widely available as both an ornamental plant and seed under a variety of names – Golden Clematis, Virgins-Bower – from seed; Radar Love, Helios. *C. tibetana* is a very similar yellow flowered clematis that is also available and hybridizes with *C. tangutica*.

Yellow clematis has become very common and becoming abundant at some sites in the Bow Valley corridor from Wheatland County through Calgary to Canmore; also in city of Medicine Hat, town of Jasper, city of Edmonton, MD of Pincher Creek.²

In Alberta there is a native blue-flowered clematis which grows in the foothills – *C. occidentalis* or common names Blue clematis, blue Virgin's Bower.³ A white-flowered clematis native to western N. America is *C. ligusticifolia* var. *ligusticifolia* – Western white clematis or white Virgin's Bower.

Habitat:

Yellow clematis is tolerant of cold, drought, nutrient-poor soils, and part shade, but prefers full sun. It develops a long taproot³ can be found thriving in open woodland, grassy areas and even gravelly areas such as railway ballast and industrial areas. In its native habitat it grows at elevations of 1300-5400 m.⁴



Identification:

Stems: Several stems per plant, growing up to 3-4 m long.¹ Young stems are green while the older stems are tough & woody.

Leaves: Leaves are bright green and compound with 5-7 lance-shaped leaflets 5-6 cm long, which may be lobed. Leaf tips are pointed and leaf edges are coarsely toothed. Leaves may be slightly hairy on the underside and are deciduous.

Flowers: Flowers are lemon-yellow, nodding, with four petals, and appear mid-summer through late fall. Flowers are bell-shaped at first and then flatten as the petals spread. Petals may be silky-hairy on the outside and occasionally tinged purplish-brown.¹ Flowers are borne at the ends of stems or in leaf axils – usually solitary but sometimes 2 or 3 together – on a short (0.5-3 cm) peduncle¹ (flower stem). Bracts are similar to the leaves but smaller.⁴

Seed: Seeds are oval (3.5-4.5 mm long) with silky tails about 5-6 cm long.⁴



TOP: Yellow Clematis flower in several stages (photo by Alec McClay)

ABOVE: Yellow Clematis flower (photo by Doug Waylett)

Prevention:

Yellow clematis is distributed mainly through the nursery trade, and then spreads far beyond the gardens and flowerbeds via its abundant, wind dispersed seed. Do not purchase plants or seeds labeled with any of the names listed above.

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Yellow Clematis *(continued)*



Photos by Alec McClay

TOP: Yellow Clematis infestation

ABOVE LEFT: Yellow Clematis leaves

ABOVE RIGHT: Yellow Clematis seed heads

Control:

Grazing: Not known. *Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.*

Cultivation: Not known. Unlikely since stem pieces can produce new plants and vines climb and out-shade any competing vegetation.

Mechanical: Repeated hand pulling prior to seed set can provide effective control and possibly eradicate small infestations.³

Chemical:⁵ Aminopyralid has been used successfully on flowering plants, newly emerging plants and the re-sprouting shoots of previously hand pulled plants, but does not have much effect on the woody stems of older plants. Picloram has also been effective when used early spring or later in the fall. Continue to stress the plant by hand pulling shoots (pers. comm. N. Harder, 2009). Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date.

¹ Grey-Wilson, C. 1989. *Clematis orientalis* (Ranunculaceae) and its allies. *Kew Bulletin* 44: 33-60.

² McClay, A. 2007. Risk assessment fact sheet for golden clematis, *Clematis tangutica*.

³ Yellow Clematis fact sheet, Non-native Vegetation Control Plan, Jasper National Park.

⁴ Grey-Wilson, C. 2000. *Clematis, the genus: a comprehensive guide for gardeners, horticulturists, and botanists*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 219 pp.

⁵ Always follow the product labels. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the *Minor Use of Pesticides* regulation constitutes an offence under both the *Federal Pest Control Products Act* and *Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.