

Cuscutaceae

dodder family

Distributed throughout the world, the family includes 100 species. Typified by a parasitic lifestyle, they lack chlorophyll. Attaching to host plants they enter tissue of their hosts via haustoria, promoting degeneration of the weak roots. Stems are glabrous and variously pink, yellow, orange or white. Flowers are small and perfect. Corolla is sympetalous; the calyx is deeply incised or of distinct sepals. Plants 4–5-merous and fleshy. Stamens are subtended by a set of scales. The styles may have a disc-shaped base called a stylopodium. Fruits are in the form of globose or ovoid capsules or utracles, sometimes even concave.

Cuscuta L. dodders

Parasitic, they are not host-specific attaching to a variety of available plant species. Flowering only late in summer. The dehiscent capsules of our species are circumscissile.

Key to species

- A. All or most flowers with a four-parted corolla. *Cuscuta cephalanthi*
- aa. All flowers with corollas five-parted. B
 - B. Corolla lobes acute; calyx lobes reaching or exceeding the sinus in the corollas; stylopodium absent. *C. campestris*
 - bb. Corolla lobes obtuse at the tip; calyx lobes' tips not reaching the sinus in the corolla lobes; stylopodium present. *C. gronovii*

Cuscuta campestris

Calyx is about equal in length to the corolla, its acute lobes about 1mm tall. Twigs are golden coloured. Costea reported that NS plants formerly labelled as *C. pentagona* probably belong here (2014, personal comm.). Our *Cuscuta* material should be re-examined with this in mind.

Flowers earlier from June until frost.

Generally in open habitats with dry soil; parasitizes many species.

Unknown without examining collections.

Known from most provinces and states.

STATUS: Undetermined.

***Cuscuta cephalanthi* Engelm.**

Buttonbush Dodder; cuscute du céphalanthe



Photo by Sean Blaney



Photo by Sean Blaney

Flowers are sessile, only 2–2.5mm long, clustered in compact round inflorescences. Calyx lobes are strongly overlapping and shorter than the corolla tube. Corolla is persistent on the fruit.

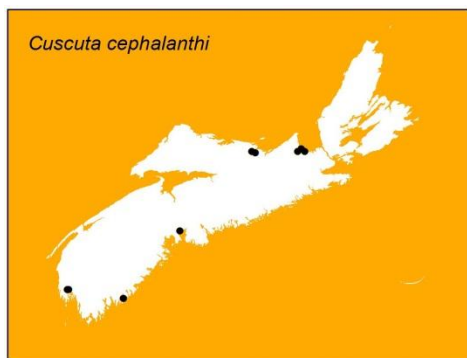
Flowers during August and September.

Low-lying coastal areas, often seen parasitizing *Symphyotrichum novi-begii*.

Locally abundant at Loch Broom, Pictou Co. Known from Hubbards and Antigonish as well as Tusket River, Yarmouth Co. Louis Head Beach, Shelburne Co.

Ranges from NS to BC and lower 48 states except for SK, the American Great Plains and the extreme southeast.

STATUS: ORANGE-listed.



A record of *Cuscuta epithymum* has been unsubstantiated. This introduction is known from NB, ON and BC southward and is listed as a noxious weed/invasive species in many jurisdictions.

***Cuscuta gronovii* Willd.**

Common Dodder; cuscute de Gronovius



Photo by David Mazerolle

Stems are reddish brown, twisting and vining around its host plant. Flowers are white, tiny and barely more than 2.5mm long. Fruits are round capsules, the withered corolla subtending them.

Flowers during late July and August.

On a variety of species in damp locations, as lakeshores, brackish wetlands and thickets.

Scattered in the southwestern counties, eastward to Cape Breton. Locally abundant.

NS to AB south to OR, AZ and FL.



Photo by Martin Thomas