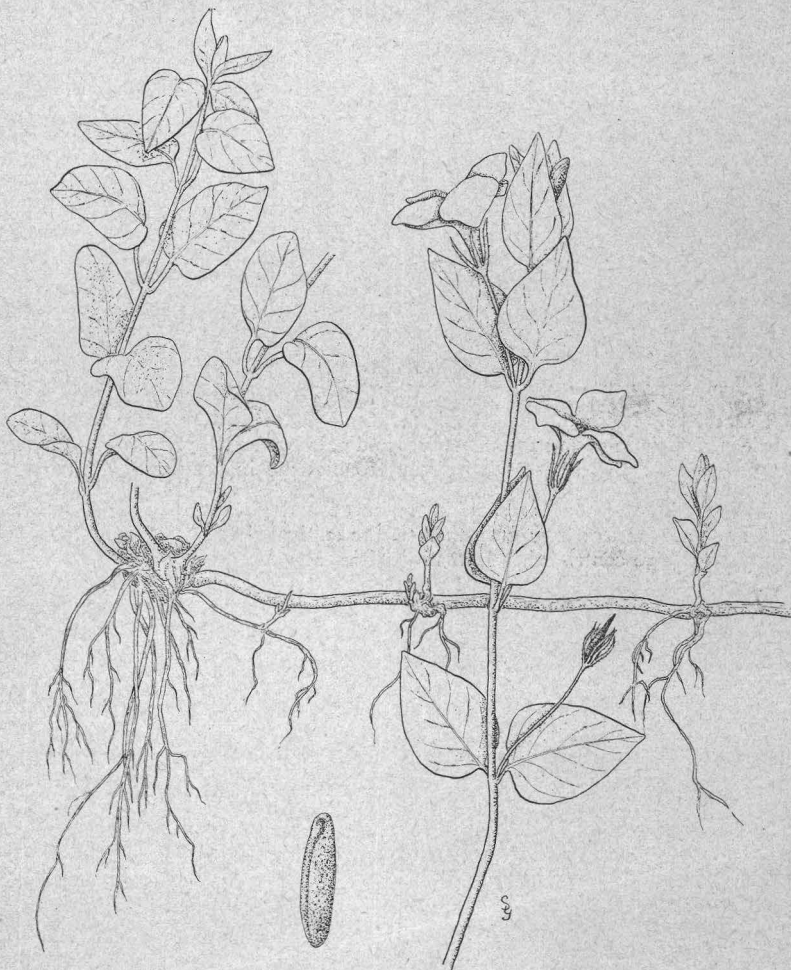


Myrtle

LAWRENCE JENKINS

E. R. JACKMAN



MYRTLE—*Vinca minor*—Showing nature of plant growth, stem with leaves and flowers, and seed. Seed magnified 2 diameters.

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Myrtle

(*Vinca minor*)

By LAWRENCE JENKINS and E. R. JACKMAN*

Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Other name: Periwinkle

Myrtle is commonly found around cemeteries and on rich, moist, shaded soils bordering gardens, lawns, and waste places. It is not a particularly difficult weed to eradicate in cultivated land. Rootstocks underground and runners above ground cause rapid spread in noncultivated land. The runners form a dense mat that will shade and choke out lawn grasses and other vegetation if not controlled. It makes an excellent ground cover. The runners take root at the nodes. Reproduction is also assured by rootstocks, and to a small degree by seed. Stems are somewhat woody and contain a milky juice. Leaves are evergreen, heart-shaped, flat at the base, and are borne on short stems attached to the main stem. They are generally from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches long, glossy green, and produced in pairs opposite each other along the stems. Ornamental flowers are from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch across, blue, have five petals, and are produced individually on short stems arising from the axils formed by the leaf and the main stem.

Damage. Most of the complaints come from owners of lawns, flower gardens, and those caring for cemeteries and golf courses. Myrtle seldom bothers in plowed land and is not particularly troublesome in pastures.

Control. Large areas should be plowed and given a period of summer fallow or seeded to a row crop that can be cultivated for a season. The weed can generally be controlled in lawns by raising the runners and mowing closely. Sodium chlorate mixed at the rate of 2 to 4 ounces per gallon of water and sprayed on the weeds should give good control. One gallon of solution is enough to cover 100 square feet. Several sprayings may be necessary. Because of the glossy nature of the foliage, it is desirable to add a small amount of soap or a casein spreader to give better coverage.

Weeds not in lawns should be treated with sodium chlorate, either as a spray or dry, at the rate of 2 to 3 pounds to the square rod. Superphosphate dusted on the plants until they are white will burn them down and after a number of treatments may kill them. Iron sulphate mixed at the rate of 2 pounds to a gallon of water and sprayed on the weed should give control in lawns. One gallon of solution should cover 400 square feet. This treatment is most satisfactory if applied on a cloudy day, but if followed shortly by a rain, results may be unsatisfactory. These suggested treatments will kill clover, but the grass will soon recover. After treating, the area should be fertilized to stimulate grass growth, which will in itself often do much to cause the myrtle to be choked out. Other methods of controlling perennial weeds are explained in Extension Bulletin 510.

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