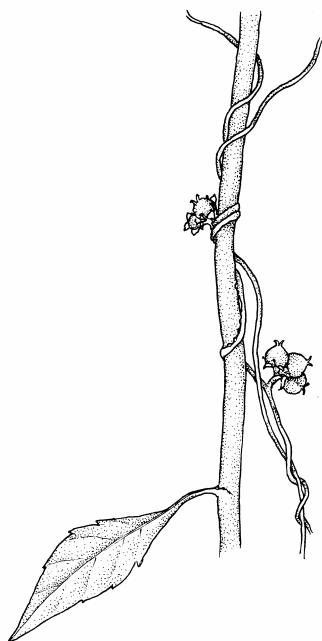


# Buttonbush dodder (*Cuscuta cephalanthii* Engelm.)

## Dodder Family (Cuscutaceae)

*Plant Species of Concern*

State rank: SU (unknown), Global rank: G5 (secure)



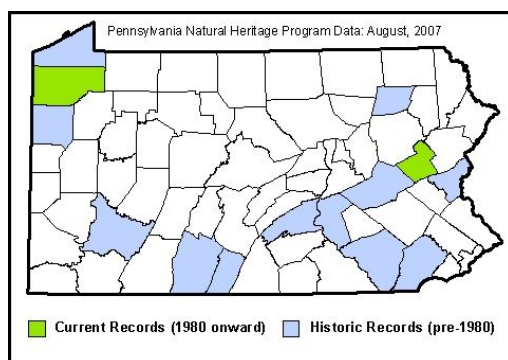
*a dodder with seed capsules*

**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.

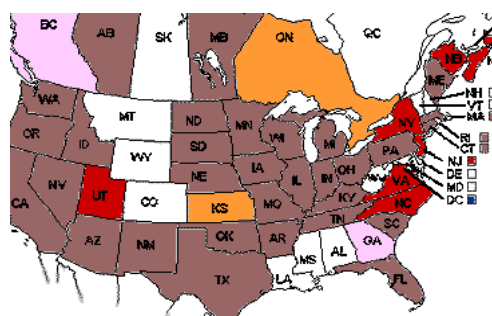
**Range** - The range of Buttonbush dodder includes most of the United States from Maine to Washington State and south to Florida and New Mexico. It is known from scattered sites in southern and western counties in Pennsylvania. It is probably more common in the state than present records indicate. Because 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.



### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (September 2007)



#### State/Province Status Ranks

SX – presumed extirpated  
SH – possibly extirpated  
S1 – critically imperiled  
S2 – imperiled  
S3 – vulnerable  
S4 – apparently secure  
S5 – secure  
Not ranked/under review  
exotic

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

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: September 4, 2007).

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