

Striga or witchweed (multiple crops)

Striga hermonthica, *S. asiatica*, *S. aspera*, *S. gesnerioides*



Striga hermonthica flowering on maize (USDA APHIS PPQ Archive, www.bugwood.org)



Striga gesnerioides parasitizing roots of cowpea (Rob Williams, CABI)



Flowers of *Striga hermonthica* (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Flickr)

Prevention	Monitoring	Direct Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use resistant varieties if available • Use certified/clean seed to reduce the risk of contamination • Delay planting until seasonal rains have set in to reduce host plant water loss • Intercropping can shade and suppress <i>Striga</i> e.g. use <i>Desmodium</i>, beans, cowpeas, groundnuts or green grams for maize • Grow trap crops, such as cotton, cowpea, pearl millet and soyabean for <i>S. asiatica</i>. These stimulate <i>Striga</i> seed germination, but do not become infected, causing <i>Striga</i> to die • Improve soil fertility and therefore crop stand using organic, inorganic, or green manure fertilizer for long-term control • Irrigate crop during dry periods so plants do not get stressed, but prevent runoff water from infested land to avoid seed introduction as they are transported by water • Keep farm tools, machinery and feet clean to prevent spread of seed • Limit movement of livestock in infested areas as seed can spread via their hooves and gut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected crops include: maize, sorghum, millets, upland rice, cowpea and sugarcane • Most species of <i>Striga</i> have bright green leaves and stems 30-100 cm high, with bright (purple, pink, red, orange, yellow, white) flowers and poorly developed roots <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>S. gesnerioides</i> is totally parasitic, with small, unexpanded leaves and a cluster of fleshy, pale-green or yellow shoots, 10-20 cm high • Symptoms appear before the appearance of <i>Striga</i> above the ground • Look out for crop plants which are stunted, yellow, scorched and wilted even when the soil is moist. These symptoms are similar to nutritional deficiencies or drought • Regularly (at least every two weeks) check for <i>Striga</i> flowers and seed development to prevent seed set, spread and build up of seed bank in the field. Take action as soon as one <i>Striga</i> plant is seen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously uproot and burn crop stubble and <i>Striga</i>, before flowering and seed setting to reduce seed bank • Hand pull the larger species, such as <i>S. hermonthica</i>, if populations are low, but not <i>S. asiatica</i>, which is much smaller and has seeds that mature and shed faster

Note: Pesticides may be available to control this pest. Please check with the Ministry of Agriculture in your country to find out which pesticides are registered in your country and the local restrictions for their use.