

# Creeping bellflower (aka campanula) should be eradicated from Regina

## 1. Introduction

Good afternoon, honourable Mayor, distinguished Councillors, and fellow citizens. My name is Angèle Poirier and I am a citizen and proud homeowner here in Regina. I was delighted to read that at the last Council meeting in July 2020, a noxious weed control enforcement plan is going forward. I would like to join this discussion and provide some of my own experience and research on a would-be noxious weed called creeping bellflower.

Firstly, I'll provide evidence that this plant is not a flower, but indeed, a noxious weed. Secondly, I'll share some research I've done on herbicides. Thirdly, I will share the shocking fact that this plant is actually available in our local garden centres. And lastly, I will suggest five specific points of education about creeping bellflower, so that residents are aware of, and can take preventative measures against, this truly noxious weed.

## 2. The invasiveness of creeping bellflower

Again, I applaud Council's decision to crack down on weeds in Regina. Although dandelions are probably the posterchild for invasive weeds, I submit that creeping bellflower is even worse.

Firstly, I'll speak from my own experience. I have given up practically my entire summer to manually eradicate my yard of creeping bellflower. Pictured below, you can see that the taproots go down further than 12 inches, which is longer than your typical dandelion root. Above these carrot-like taproots is a messy system of smaller roots, which shoot out in all directions and sprout up as green leaves and, if left long enough, grow a metre tall and bloom purple flowers. These roots are so messy that extricating them from the soil is like separating the spaghetti from the meat sauce.



Figure 1: Creeping bellflower in Angèle's yard, 2020

Secondly, I want to provide evidence of the creeping bellflower infestation I have seen in my own neighbourhood. This invasive weed has somehow spread from my north flowerbed, around my house, and into my neighbour's yard to the south. Another neighbour a few blocks down said he caught it from his neighbour as well, and it's a

losing battle. All along my street, lawns have large patches of creeping bellflower – trimmed short and not allowed to flower, but unsightly just the same, as the grass has been entirely choked out. In the back alley of 2100 block Reynolds, it is absolutely out of control, with purple-flowering plants towering nearly as tall as I am. Each plant can spawn up to 15,000 seeds, so any flowering plants pose a serious threat to neighbouring yards ([Minnesota Wildflowers](#), 2020).

As a third piece of evidence that creeping bellflower is truly noxious, I point you to [this forum](#) I discovered online. Just some of the interesting phrases people use are: “the terror in my front yard,” “even more tenacious than goutweed,” “serious infestation,” “Wish I knew where it came from in my garden so I could sue,” and, my favourite, “Had I really invited Satan into my garden?” And lest you think that this forum only represents gardeners in distant places of the world, please observe that one of the contributors’ screen names is “donna\_in\_sask.” No doubt there are other forums online that warn against creeping bellflower.

Finally, I want to raise awareness about the measures taken by other cities to eradicate creeping bellflower and its relatives. The Star of Bethlehem, which is a relative of creeping bellflower, is labelled as noxious in Alabama, and is recognized by 10 other states as “invasive exotic” (Gardening Know How, 2020). Here in Canada, creeping bellflower is designated in the *Alberta Weed Control Act* as noxious ([Edmonton.ca](#), 2020). As a result, some Alberta greenhouses publish warnings against creeping bellflower, much to their credit ([Salisbury Greenhouse](#), 2013). At a municipal level, in 2013, the city of Edmonton added creeping bellflower to its municipal noxious weed list; then in 2018, they enacted policies including mobilizing bylaw officer patrols and enabling fines of \$250 to \$5,000 ([Snowdon, 2018](#)). The City of Calgary also provides information to the public about prevention, alternatives, and links to fact sheets such as [this one](#) ([Calgary.ca](#), 2020).

Lastly, and closer to home, CBC did an article in 2019 warning against the increased presence of creeping bellflower in Regina ([Francis, 2019](#)). Much to my chagrin, the article reported that because the Ministry of Agriculture does not recognize creeping bellflower as a weed, the City of Regina takes no measures to control or even monitor it<sup>1</sup>. My hope is that this will change in light of the City’s current discussion on noxious weeds and my submission.

### 3. Chemical warfare

I have done a lot of research on chemical eradication of creeping bellflower. According to [this lab experiment](#) (published in the *American Society for Horticultural Science* journal), clopyralid is the most effective herbicide for eradicating creeping bellflower ([Coburn et. al.](#), 2018). Surprisingly, glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup) was seven times less effective than clopyralid (so, people who think Roundup kills everything are actually wrong, and I can confirm this from my own farming background).

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<sup>1</sup> However, a [2008 report](#) by the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan does list it as an invasive species (Saskatchewan PCAP, 2008).

Clopyralid is the active ingredient in these products: Stinger, Transline, Reclaim, Curtail, Confront, Clopyr AG, Lontrel, Millennium Ultra, Millenium Ultra Plus, Redeem, Versatill®, Multiple, Tango TM, and Void ([Wikipedia](#), 2020). Transline has the highest concentration of clopyralid. To my knowledge, these products are only available through ag retailers; I have not been able to source them through Home Depot or Rona.

May I respectfully submit that, as part of cracking down on weeds in Regina, the City consider making certain herbicides available to the public for purchase. I know from my farming background that no certifications or liability insurance were required to purchase these chemicals for farm use, so I hope the same applies to residential use. On August 4, 2020, I submitted a service request to the city, asking whether I could source any of these herbicides through the city, but received no response.

#### 4. Cut off availability from local suppliers

Dandelions are the posterchild for noxious weeds, and everybody knows that. As a result, garden centres don't bother selling dandelion seeds or plants because they know they'd never sell. I wish this was the case for creeping bellflower. As I've shown, creeping bellflower is even more invasive and more difficult to kill than dandelions – and yet, creeping bellflower is readily available both in seed form and potted plant form at local gardening centres, including Home Depot and Rona. It is sometimes sold under the name campanula, which is its genus name, or Star of Bethlehem, which is quite a misnomer.

If dandelions were sold at Home Depot and Rona, it would be understandable if every yard in the city was full of dandelions. After all, they'd look pretty, in their yellow splendour, sitting on the shelf at the garden centre. Applying this same logic to creeping bellflower, then, if people don't know how invasive this plant is, they can't really be blamed for buying it at the store – after all, it looks quite pretty on Rona.ca (see right).

I submit that as part of its noxious weed strategy, the City adopt a policy on banning certain plants from local gardening centres. This means removing creeping bellflower, campanula, and any of its relatives, from the shelves at Home Depot, Rona, and other stores. This may require engaging their suppliers, which, to name a few, are:

[Marsolais](#), [Searle Greenhouses](#), [Burnaby Lake Greenhouses](#), and [Le Coteau Nursery](#).



Figure 2: Campanula potted plant, available on Rona.ca

#### 5. Education

I last topic I will discuss is education. As I said, I applaud the city on its enforcement plan on noxious weed control, and I was delighted to read in the July [council minutes](#) that an education campaign would be part of the plan. I respectfully submit that in addition to informing residents of their obligations and the consequences regarding

weed control bylaws, the City consider education on creeping bellflower. I recommend five specific points of education:

1. the invasiveness of creeping bellflower, for which I have already made a compelling case;
2. identifying its many different names;
3. warning against buying it as seeds, plants, or part of wildflower mixes;
4. suggesting alternatives for those who like the tall, purple flowers;
5. and providing information on effective eradication such as fact sheets and how-to guides, like [this video](#) on herbicide application.

I respectfully submit these five points of education as part of a strategy to target creeping bellflower, as other cities in Alberta have done.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, then, we have seen that creeping bellflower is not actually a flower, but a noxious weed. I have shared scholarly research which shows that the brand name Transline is the most effective herbicide for killing this noxious weed. And I have suggested very tangible and direct measures that could be taken by the City, namely, cutting off the availability of creeping bellflower from local gardening centres, and five points of education to include in a future public education campaign. I have submitted this information in good faith with the intention of beautifying our city and promoting responsible stewardship of the spaces we occupy.

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