Take a look out the front window, back window or any other window in your home. Is there a viny looking plant growing in the grass, on the fence or even up the house? If so, take a closer look. It could be a noxious weed known as bindweed.

Bindweed, according to code enforcement officer Dawn Worley, doesn't look like a weed. In fact, some people think it looks like a normal flower or plant growing on their property.

The leaves of field bindweed are arrowhead shaped with neatly parallel sides and a rounded leaf tip. The flower is white or pink in color and can grow up to one inch wide.

Hedge bindweed has the same characteristics with a triangular shaped leaf with a pointed tip and a white or pinkish colored flower capable of growing up to two inches wide.

The only thing differentiating this weed from a plant or flower is its root system. Bindweed roots are capable of growing 30 feet into the ground. Commonly known as field bindweed, the weed is very difficult to eradicate once the root system has established itself.

Pulling the weed is only possible in the early stages, usually between eight and 12 days after the weed has emerged. In order to completely eradicate the weed, one needs to stay on top of it, pulling the weed constantly in its early stages.

"A lot of people mistake it for an ivy," Worley said. "Not only does it spread, but it multiplies also. If your neighbor has bindweed, you can pretty much guarantee within the next year or so you're going to have some in your yard."

Worley said a problem area is on the west end of town where wheat and corn fields are closer to homes.

"Once you get it, treating it with a Roundup or 2,4-D can take between two or three years to completely eliminate it," she said.

Bindweed mite eats plant

The Dept. of Agriculture has developed a mite to eat and eradicate bindweed.

Worley said she used the mite last year as a test to see if the bug could handle bindweed problems in town.

The mite is designed just for bindweed and eats through the root system into the fall which helps eliminate the weed.

The mite will not harm pets or other species of plants or flowers.

Bindweed mites are an alternative to using 2,4-D or other types of chemicals. Worley said some people are hesitant to use chemicals and the mite is a great way to get around that.

Those who would like to try using the bindweed mite to tackle problems may contact the Dept. of Agriculture or go online and fill out the request-a-bug form at www.palisadeinsectary.com. However on the web site, it is noted the deadline for the 2009 list was May 29 of this year.

The mites go dormant in cold weather so the ideal time to introduce them to the growing weed is when it begins to appear towards the end of June.

The mites cost $35 and come in a cooler on an actual piece of bindweed. Worley said the piece with the mites is placed within the growing bindweed and the mites are transferred to the problem area.

Bindweed falls under the weed category in the city weed ordinance. Worley said she is willing to help people struggling with the weed. She notes there are stronger chemicals available to fight

the weed, but they aren’t sold over counters like Roundup or 2,4-D.

Anyone with questions regarding city ordinances or rules may contact Worley at the Police Department. Messages can be left for her at 854-2342 or her voice mail at the Comm Center at 854-2244.

Issues concerning trees are to be addressed in the next CCC article on July 30.

Those interested in seeing a code discussed or explored in future CCC articles should contact the *Enterprise* office at 854-2811.