

The ENEMY: Mistletoe (*Phoradendron macrophyllum*).

This is an evergreen parasitic plant that grows on landscape trees and ornamentals in coastal areas. Closer to home, we quite often see infestations of dwarf Mistletoe (*Arceuthobium ssp.*) in conifer species in the local mountains. This plant is parasitic, which means that it uses another plant to survive. This plant is normally spread by birds: germinates and roots into the bark and stems of trees. You may have seen this without knowing it. If you look up into a tree and see a very dense section of a branch or one that looks like it has a tumbleweed stuck in it, this is usually mistletoe. The tree tries to grow around it which causes it to have a very thick branch with smaller stems growing out of it.

STRATEGY: Because Mistletoe is parasitic, it draws all its moisture and nutrients from the host tree, thus it does not require direct sunlight like many invasive plants. It greatly disfigures trees by causing these large 'clumps' in the branches. When in deciduous trees, it will be the only noticeable green growth once the leaves fall off in the fall. The dwarf mistletoe spreads its seeds by forcible discharge of the seeds. They can 'launch' their seeds 30 to 40 feet.

DEFENSE: Mechanical control by pruning out the mistletoe seems to be the most effective method of control. Cutting the mistletoe from the branch will normally not control it completely as the threadlike roots penetrate well into the branch. Complete removal of the branch is best. Chemical control can be effective. Using a product such as Florel Fruit Eliminator (same thing that keeps Crabapples from growing fruit) early in the spring, when the host tree is dormant is most effective. This type of herbicide is very slow acting and may take a few years to completely control the weed. This CHRISTmas when you are kissing under the Mistletoe, just imagine it is also an unwanted pest in someone else's eyes.