

**By Sean Hubbard**

OSU News

DURANT — Southern Oklahoma is under attack. Residents of Durant have been waging war against an invasive and aggressive enemy for more than seven years.

Originally promoted as an ornamental plant more than 100 years ago, kudzu has taken over much of the southeastern United States. While it is listed on the federal invasive species list as a noxious weed, it is legal in Oklahoma to transplant this viney species, which is probably how it arrived in our state.

To date, there are approximately 25 confirmed locations throughout Oklahoma that have kudzu. Jumping on this problem in its early stages could save millions of tax dollars for Oklahomans. “If we could control it there (25 locations) we won’t have the devastation that Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi have gone through,” said Karen Hickman, professor in the department of natural resource ecology and management at Oklahoma State University.” They are spending millions and millions of dollars a year to try and control it. If we took care of this now and made it illegal to move and transplant, we might be able to get a handle on it and it won’t threaten the Oklahoma forests or the Oklahoma natural resources.

Anna Cahill-Marcy and her neighbor, Paul Lynch, have already seen how aggressive this plant really is. Lynch noticed a small patch of kudzu growing near a creek on his property when he purchased it in 2003. It has been a non-stop battle ever since.

“After several tries, I’ve finally made a little bit of progress, but there is still a lot to do,” said Lynch, who is a professional landscaper and has access to chemicals that the public does not. “It kind of makes me nervous, because it just devastates the trees. It grows right up the trees and smothers them and they can’t produce food and they die.”

What started as a small patch now covers several acres of property in the area. It has even crossed the street and gotten onto Cahill-Marcy’s property, which was purchased just over a year ago.

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