
Black nightshade *Solanum nigrum*



Annual, thornless, essentially glabrous herb, 0.1 to 1 m tall. Leaves alternate, sinuately or coarsely toothed, 5 to 10 cm long, 2 to 5 cm wide. Flowers white, 6 to 8 mm broad. Fruit shiny, black when ripe, several seeded, 5 to 9 mm in diameter. Found throughout the South, but seldom abundant; in fields, waste places, and cultivated ground. [Inset: black and green fruit]

Toxicity

The toxic alkaloid solanine has been isolated from this group of plants. Toxicity of these plants varies, depending on maturity, environment, and portion of plant ingested. The berries are the most toxic part and are more toxic when they are green and immature. The berries are somewhat less toxic when they mature and turn black. Leaves are also toxic but to a lesser degree. Humans and all classes of livestock have been poisoned.

A closely related plant *S. intrusum* is known as “garden huckleberry” or “wonderberry.” Garden huckleberry is a cultivated plant with nontoxic fruit. However, distinguishing *S. intrusum* from *S. nigrum* is almost impossible.

Symptoms

Two syndromes have been described: acute and chronic. The acutely poisoned animal is characterized by irritation of the mouth and gastrointestinal lesions. In the chronic form, characteristic symptoms are unthriftiness, jaundiced mucous membranes, abdominal dropsy, and constipation.

Treatment

Nonspecific. Treat early symptoms with tannic acid, charcoal, protectants, and evacuation of the stomach.