

Horsenettle *Solanum carolinense*



Perennial, thorny herb, 0.2 to 0.8 m tall. Leaves alternate, simple, irregularly pinnately lobed, 7 to 12 cm long, 3 to 8 cm wide, stellate pubescent. Flowers white to purple, 2.3 to 3.1 cm broad, borne in few-flowered, terminal racemes. Fruit green, turning yellow, 1 to 1.5 cm in diameter, resembling a small tomato. Found throughout the South; common in pastures, old fields, waste places, and sometimes in cultivated ground. [Inset: flower]

Toxicity

The toxic alkaloid solanine has been isolated from *Solanum* spp. Toxicity of these plants varies depending upon maturity, environment, and portion of plant ingested. The berries are the most toxic part and are more toxic when they have matured and turned yellow. Immature green fruit are also considered toxic. Leaves are also toxic, but to a lesser degree. Humans and all classes of livestock have been poisoned.

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, symptoms include unthriftiness, jaundiced mucous membranes, abdominal dropsy, and constipation.

Treatment

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