

Weed of The Week

Common Cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium* L.)

The common cocklebur is an erect summer annual in the aster family. These plants can grow upwards of 4 feet. Common cockleburs have large rough, sandpaper-like, alternate leaves. Leaf shape ranges from heart-shaped to triangular egg-shaped with rounded tips. Fully mature stems are hairy and purple-spotted. Seedling stems are thick with a purple base. The most identifying and troublesome part of this plant is the hooked burs that easily attach themselves to people, animals, and anything else they can attach to. The woody, brown egg-shaped burs start out as small, green immature burs. Each mature bur is covered in prickles and contains two seeds.

Common cocklebur is an extremely competitive weed due to its fast emergence and rapid growth supported by the large seeds. The seedlings can emerge from deep in the soil. Tine weeding and rotary hoeing have little effectiveness. Most broadleaf herbicides for pastures are very effective, as well as Glyphosate for spot treatments. If you are using a chemical treatment in a pasture, consider the residual impact of the herbicide and how long one must keep animals out of the pasture after spraying. If you only have a small number of plants, manually removing them before they go to seed is effective at reducing plants before they can get established.

