

Xanthium spinosum

[Synonyms : *Acanthoxanthium ambrosioides*, *Acanthoxanthium spinosum*, *Acanthoxanthium spinosum* subsp. *catharticum*, *Acanthoxanthium spinosum* subsp. *spinosum*, *Xanthium ambrosioides*, *Xanthium armatum*, *Xanthium canescens*, *Xanthium catharticum*, *Xanthium medium*, *Xanthium multifidum*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *ambrosioides*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *brachyacanthum*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *canescens*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *heterocephalum*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *inerme*, *Xanthium spinosum* forma *laciniatum*, *Xanthium spinosum* forma *praecocius*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *spinosum*, *Xanthium spinosum* var. *synacanthum*, *Xanthium xanthocarpon*]

SPINY COCKLEBUR is a spiny annual. Native to southern Europe it has small greenish-yellow (sometimes white or red) flowers.

It is also known as Bathurst-burr, *Boetebossie* (Afrikaans), Bur weed, Cocklebur, Clotbur, *Lizzaij* (Arabic), Noogoora bur, *Řepeň trnitá* (Czech), Spiny clot burr, Thorny clot weed, Thorny cocklebur, *Tistelgullfrö* (Swedish), and *Tistelskräppa* (Swedish).

Warning – contact with the plant can cause dermatitis. Seeds encased in the burrs, and young seedlings, grazed in large amounts can be fatally poisonous for animals which normally avoid it because of the prickles. The prickles can also cause painful physical injury.

(Although no records of animal deaths exist in Britain they have been recorded in the United States.)

Spinosum is derived from Latin *spina* (thorn, spine) meaning ‘spiny’.

Spiny cocklebur yields a yellow dye.

The plant must have reached North America at some point as records show that the Cherokee Indians absorbed it into their medicinal repertoire. They used it to cause vomiting, they took it to treat croup and cramps, they chewed the root if they were bitten by a rattlesnake, and they used an infusion of the burrs to dislodge a throat obstruction. The Mahuna tribe also used it only they employed it for kidney disorders.

Medicinally, the plant has been used by European herbalists to treat hydrophobia, fever and urinary disorders.