



Silverleaf nightshade

Silverleaf nightshade is a perennial, toxic plant with silvery leaves, star-shaped flowers, and yellow berries, commonly found in disturbed soils across North and South America.

Description

Silverleaf nightshade is an upright, prickly perennial in the nightshade family, typically growing 1 to 3 feet tall with stems covered in short spines and silvery, downy hairs that give the plant its characteristic color. The leaves are narrow, lance-shaped to oblong, with wavy margins, and the plant produces lavender to pale blue star-shaped flowers with yellow centers from spring through fall. Its fruits are small, round berries, yellow when immature, sometimes turning orange, red, or nearly black when ripe.

Habitat and Distribution

Native to North and South America, silverleaf nightshade thrives in poor, dry soils and disturbed habitats such as prairies, open woods, and roadsides. It spreads via seeds and creeping root stalks, and even small root fragments can regenerate into new plants, making it difficult to control. It is considered a noxious weed in 21 states and several countries including Australia, South Africa, and Greece Wikipedia.

Toxicity

All parts of the plant, including leaves and berries, are toxic to humans and livestock due to the glycoalkaloid solanine. Toxic effects in animals can include incoordination, excessive salivation, labored breathing, trembling, weakness, gastrointestinal irritation, and in severe cases, death. Sheep and goats are more resistant, while cattle, horses, and humans are highly susceptible. Even small amounts, 0.1–0.3% of body weight, can be poisonous. The plant has also been implicated in ivermectin toxicosis in horses.

Management

Silverleaf nightshade is hard to eradicate due to its deep roots and ability to regenerate from small fragments. Frequent mowing can increase its resilience, producing deeper taproots and spikier stems. Control strategies include mechanical removal, careful **herbicide application**, and preventing seed spread, especially in overgrazed or disturbed areas where the plant tends to dominate.

