

Rough Cocklebur

(*Xanthium strumarium*)

While rough cocklebur is not an invasive species in British Columbia, it is considered an agricultural weed in Canada and listed as a noxious weed in the United States. The plant is recognized as a problematic weed wherever it is found. In Burnaby, the plant was first reported at Deer Lake beach, in 2018. The plant was likely spread by a person or dog, carrying seeds from another infested area. The site has been treated and is currently being monitored. We ask for your help to lookout for other plants.

Background

Rough cocklebur is a large, annual broad-leaved herb found throughout North America that thrives in warm climates. The species grows in moist soils and agricultural fields, and is often found on river banks, lake shores and cultivated areas.

The plant is a concern due to its impact on users and its ability to spread. The seeds and young plants contain a toxic substance to livestock, while some people experience skin irritation after coming into contact with the plant. As well, cockleburs are prolific seed producers and the bur-like seed heads spread easily. The plant is self-pollinating, and a single plant typically produces 400 to 500 fruits a year. Each fruit contains two seeds, the larger seed germinates the first year, and the second seed sprouts the following year. Cocklebur seeds generally do not survive more than five years.

Rough cocklebur is easily spread by people and animals through contact with the plant's fruit. The burs latch onto animal hide or clothing, and are transported to a new location.

How to Identify Rough Cocklebur

Mature plants are distinguished by large coarse burs and harsh leaves. Young and non-flowering plants are distinguished by oval or broad triangular, rough textured leaves with have a V or M shaped base.

- » **Stem:** rough and hairy, spotted with purple and stands 0.2 to 2 meters tall
- » **Leaves:** stem leaves are broadly triangular to oval, becoming more heart-shaped at the base. Leaves alternate, with lobes, and a rough-hairy surface. The edges of the leaves are coarsely toothed.
- » **Flowers:** inconspicuous, greenish in colour, and grow from the areas where the leaf meets the stem, and the ends of stems.



Report rough cocklebur sightings or suspected sightings (include photos and location if possible) to:
City of Burnaby Environmental Technician
Phone: 604-294-7690 | Email: invasivespecies@burnaby.ca