

COCKLEBUR

Xanthium strumarium

- FAMILY:** Compositae
- TRIBE:** Ambrosieae
- GENUS:** Xanthium
- SPECIES:** strumarium
- COMMON NAMES:** Cocklebur, Pennsylvania Cocklebur, Clotbur
- POLLEN GRAINS:** Spheroidal, 22.1 to 29.1 microns in diameter. Spines are vestigial, hardly apparent. Germ furrow usually three and very short. Exine thin and finely granular.
- POLLINATING PERIOD:** Last half of August and September. In milder areas some pollination from June into October.
- DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the United States.
- ALLERGIC IMPORTANCE:** Moderately important.

Of the dozen or more species of the Cocklebur growing in the United States, this species is the most common and widespread. Several varieties of this species, such as X. canadense and X. pennsylvanicum, are sometimes referred to as separate species. A similar but more robust species, Great Clotbur (Xanthium speciosum), is reportedly a much heavier pollen producer and is of greater importance within its range of the Great Plain states and the Mississippi Valley.

Cocklebur is a scabrous (rough to the touch) annual, weedy herb 2-5 feet high and often much branched. Leaves are obtusely and acutely 3-5 lobed with dentate margins. Leaf-blades are 2-5 inches long, born on petioles of equal length. Staminate flower heads are sub-spherical and occur in terminal clusters. The pistillate flower heads are two flowered and occur in the leaf axils below the staminate clusters. Staminate clusters drop soon after pollination, leaving the troublesome burs to ripen. The body of the bur is cylindrical, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, covered with sharp, hooked spines $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{5}{16}$ long. Two stout hooked beaks form the apex of the bur.

Cocklebur is a common weed of neglected land, roadsides, waste places, etc. In arid regions it is restricted to moist bottom lands and seems to thrive most abundantly in ground that is flooded some time during the year.



Xanthium canadense or *Xanthium pennsylvanicum*
(Cocklebur)