

Spiny cocklebur

Xanthium spinosum L.

Aster Family

Key identifying traits

- ❑ Flowers are small, inconspicuous, and creamy green
- ❑ Plants grow up to 3' tall
- ❑ 1" spines are found in leaf axils & at stem nodes
- ❑ Leaves are bright to dark green & hairy on the upper surface; mostly three-lobed with the center lobe much longer than the other two; up to 3" long with a prominent white mid-vein
- ❑ Fruits are oval burs up to 1/2" long with hooked spines & contain 2 seeds per bur



Photo © 2003 Kurt Stueber

Biology and ecology

- An annual reproducing by seed
- It is native to Chile but now widespread in Europe, Asia, North and South Africa, North and South America, and Australia
- The hooked spines of the fruit enable it to adhere to animals and be transported long distances
- The seeds and young cotyledon plants are toxic to livestock
- It grows in a wide variety of soil types and most frequently found in disturbed areas and barnyards but has also invaded pastures & fields



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Control

Prevention - Learn to identify plants; start monitoring early in the season; do not allow plants to produce seed

Biological - There have been biological agents found in California, Texas and Kansas

Cultural - Plant competitive grass or other cover crop

Mechanical - Cultivation is effective on seedlings; mowing can also help if done before burs develop

Chemical - Herbicides with dicamba, mecoprop, plus 2,4-D are said to control spiny cocklebur; the [PNW Weed Management handbook](#) does not have specific control recommendations for this plant



John M Randall, The Nature Conservancy

Where found – Not known to be in Stevens County at this time but has been found in almost every state in the U.S.