

## APPLE OF SODOM



1. Mature plant  
2. Leaves and flower  
3. Fruit

# APPLE OF SODOM

Apple of Sodom (*Solanum hermannii* L. sometimes known as *S. sodomaeum*) is a member of the plant family Solanaceae. This family also includes potatoes, eggplants and tomatoes.

Apple of Sodom is a native of South Africa and the Mediterranean area. In Western Australia it has mainly been found on coastal limestone soils from Yancheep to Mandurah and around Busselton and Augusta. It is also occasionally seen further inland.

The plant forms dense thickets which provide cover for rabbits and shade out pasture plants. The thickets also restrict the movement of farm animals and machinery. The whole of the plant is poisonous but it is seldom eaten due to its prickles and bitter taste. Nevertheless both child and stock deaths have been recorded overseas.

Apple of Sodom is a declared plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia.

## ECOLOGY

Apple of Sodom is a woody perennial which spreads by seed. Flowering takes place from August to January. Seeds usually fall close to the parent plant but may be dispersed in mud, on animals and machinery or in hay, silage and chaff. Most of the seed germinates in spring and late summer.

Germination is greatly increased when the adult plant is removed. New plants rapidly establish on grazing land, parkland, vacant town blocks and other cleared or disturbed land. Some seed may remain dormant in the soil for several years.

## DESCRIPTION

Apple of Sodom is an erect branching woody shrub. It usually grows about one to two metres high, but occasionally reaches five metres. The stems are green-purple to brown with 1cm long curved straw coloured spines.

The leaves are long with deep irregular lobes. They are up to 15cm long with long curved spines on both surfaces of the leaf. These are arranged along the veins and leaf stalk. Both stems and leaves are covered with minute star-shaped hairs.

The flowers appear in spring and summer. They are about 2cm across and their colour is purple-white with a yellow centre. Flowers contain five petals joined to form a star and curved inwards like a bell.

The round, tomato-like fruit is green and white at first, turning yellow, then brown and black as it ripens. The fruit is about 30mm in diameter. It contains numerous round flattened light brown seeds each about 3mm across.

It is essential for all landholders to control Apple of Sodom infestations and prevent the weed spreading to new areas.

***For identification of suspect plants and information on Apple of Sodom control contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Baron-Hay court, South Perth 6151. Telephone Perth (09) 368 3333 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.***