

Nicandra physalodes

Recognize the problem

Family: Solanaceae (nightshade family).

Common names: Chinese lantern, apple of Peru.

Tigrigna: Gheraccia.

An annual shrub (up to 1 m high and spreading up to 1 m wide); stems are extensively branched, hollow, heavily ribbed, soft, smooth and without hairs.

Leaves: Mid-green, 6 to 25 cm long and 2.5 to 18 cm wide, toothed and waved with irregular, shallow or deeply lobed margins.

Flowers: Bell-shaped (5 cm), commonly pale blue and white, but can be violet or white; flowers are short-lived, opening for only a few hours each day.

Fruits: Cherry-like, green-brown berries (1 to 1.5 cm in diameter) are encased within green or black-mottled papery cover and contain numerous seeds; mature fruits can resemble a Chinese lantern.

Seeds: Flattened, 1 to 1.5 mm in diameter, light brown and pitted.

Background

Origin: western South America (Peru).

Introduction: As ornamental garden plant. It is also known to have medicinal and insecticidal properties.

Habitat: Colonises bare, degraded and cultivated areas.

Spread: By seed. Seeds are a contaminant of grass and legume seed crops grown in East Africa.

Invades: Crops, disturbed sites, waste areas, roadsides, gardens, riparian zones (banks of watercourses) and forest margins.

Impacts: A competitor for light against many crops due to its rapid growth and canopy formation. Cotton is critically damaged if this weed is allowed to remain for more than two weeks after germination of the crop. Populations as low as 4.7 plants/m² have reduced maize yields by about 35% and can impede harvesting of the crop.

Scientific name(s) > *Nicandra physalodes*

Nicandra physalodes with characteristic "Chinese lantern" fruit. (Photo by Forest and Kim Starr, Flickr.)



Mature fruit with seeds. (Photo by Forest and Kim Starr, Flickr.)



The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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