



# Eastern Black Nightshade



## Plant Characteristics

*Solanum nigrum*: This is an annual, thorn-less, essentially glabrous herb, .1 to 1 m tall. Leaves alternate, sinuately or coarsely toothed with slight pubescence on the undersurface, 5 to 10 cm long and 2 to 5 cm wide. Flowers are white to purple borne in an open cluster, 6 to 8mm broad. Fruit is shiny and black when ripe and produces several seeds, which are 5 to 9mm in diameter. Can be found throughout the south and in most of Illinois; grows along stream banks, thickets, roadsides, row crop fields and other open disturbed areas.

## Toxicity

A toxic alkaloid, solanine, has been isolated from this group of plants. Toxicity of these plants varies depending upon maturity, environment and portion of the plant ingested. The berries are the most toxic part and are more toxic when they are matured. The berries of both Carolina horsenettle and black nightshade are green when immature. However, horsenettle berries turn yellow when mature and nightshade berries become purplish black. The leaves are also toxic, but to a lesser degree.

## Symptoms

All classes of livestock and humans have been poisoned. Two syndromes have been described: acute and chronic. The acutely poisoned animals are characterized by irritation of the mouth and gastrointestinal lesions. In the chronic form, unthriftiness, jaundiced mucous membranes, abdominal dropsy and constipation have all been seen.

## Treatment

Non-specific.

## Information Sources

- Poisonous Plant of the Southern United States
- <http://plants.usda.gov/>
- Bulletin 762 Horse Nutrition, Ohio State University.