

Illinois Grazing Manual Fact Sheet
SPECIES • POISONOUS PLANTS



Hemp Dogbane



Photo by: Larry Allain
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PLANTS Database

Plant Characteristics

Apocynum cannabinum: Hemp dogbane, Indian hemp, Choctaw root, rheumatism weed and snake's milk are some of the common names for this native perennial. This erect, branching, perennial can be .8 to 1.8 m (1-4 Ft.) tall with a silky sap arising from creeping, underground root stock. It reproduces by creeping roots and seeds. The leaves are opposite and ovate to elliptic, 4 to 14 cm long, 1.5 to 6 cm wide with smooth margins. The underside of the leaf is finely-hairy. Dogbane branches freely, unlike common milkweed. The flowers are white to greenish in terminal flat-topped clusters, usually overtopped by the leafy branches. The fruit is long and slender, paired drooping follicles, 10 to 22 cm long (4-8 inches) and 2 to 3 cm in diameter. The seeds are elongated and smooth. This plant is found throughout the south and much of the Midwest. It is abundant in the edges of woods, roadsides, pastures, waste areas and in some crop fields.

Toxicity

A resinoid and glucoside are found in the leaves and stems of this plant, whether green or dry. It is quite toxic and requires only 15-30 grams (< 1 ounce) of green leaves to kill a horse or cow. Livestock can be poisoned in spring, summer and fall.

Symptoms

Symptoms include increased temperature and pulse, sweating, dilated pupils and off feed, along with refusing to eat or drink. The mucous membranes (mouth and nostrils) are discolored and extremities are cold.

Treatment

Intravenous fluids and gastric protectives are suggested.

Information Sources

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