



Jatropha gossypifolia



SPURGE FAMILY

Euphorbiaceae

COMMON NAMES

English: American purging nut, bellyache bush, red fig-nut flower, red physic nut, wild cassava.

DESCRIPTION

Evergreen, erect shrub [1–3 (4) m tall]; older stems are thick and succulent-like; young branches are purplish and hairy; young shoots exude a brownish latex when damaged.

Leaves: Reddish-brown to dark bronze or purplish turning bright green with age, hairless, simple (4.5–10 cm long and 5–13 cm wide), usually with 3 or 5 deep lobes, 3–5 veins from the base, margins glandular and minutely toothed; leaf stalks are 6–9 cm long and covered in sticky hairs.

Flowers: Five dark red or deep purple petals with yellow centre, borne in branched clusters (8–15 cm long) at the tips of branches.

Fruits: Capsules (dry fruits that open at maturity), glossy green turning brown as they mature, three-lobed, slightly hairy, somewhat elongated with almost parallel sides to almost round (about 12 mm long and 10 mm wide), containing three large light brown seeds.

ORIGIN

Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Guadeloupe, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and Venezuela.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Medicine, natural oils, hedge/barrier and ornament.

INVADES

Roadsides, disturbed areas, urban open space, drainage ditches, savannah, lowlands, gullies and dry riverbeds.

IMPACTS

This weed forms dense thickets, especially in riparian areas where it readily displaces native plant species and prevents their regeneration. It also significantly reduces livestock carrying capacities outcompeting valuable forage species. Although the plant is not consumed by livestock, accidental ingestion does occur. In 1995, in northern Queensland, Australia, 312 head of livestock died (290 cattle, 7 horses and 15 goats) after accidentally consuming the plant during a drought (Csurhes, 1999).



Jatropha gossypifolia L.

