



Weed of the Month: Carolina Horsenettle

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Carolina horsenettle (*Solanum carolinense*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



Identification:

Carolina horsenettle is a perennial herb that is found in the Sierra Nevada range and Central Valley of California. It produces white to purple flowers and displays lobed leaves. The star shaped flower heads are what gives the plant its distinct look. As an adult, it produces a green berry that exhibits the look of a tomato. When the fruit ripens, it becomes yellow and becomes wrinkled. The species name *carolinense* is Latin for Carolina where it was first identified.



Top Left- Carolina horsenettle adult flowers.

Top Right- Carolina horsenettle seeds.

Invasive Behavior:

Originating from the central and eastern United States and northern Mexico, Carolina horsenettle has become very invasive in many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including grasslands and dunes. It has a blooming period of May to October. The plant spreads through seeds and roots and is dispersed through agricultural activities, water, soil movement and animals.



Impact:

The presence of Carolina horsenettle can have serious ecological and economic consequences. All parts of the plant are poisonous to both livestock and humans. Because the plant is toxic, and its prickly leaves prevent livestock from grazing on the lands that it is present on, it poses concern to ranchers. The plant contains a toxin called solanine and reaches the highest level of toxicity in the fall months.

Bottom Left- Carolina horsenettle adult flower with long distinct leaves.





Control and Management:

Consistency and proper timing when removing Carolina horsenettle from a targeted area is vital to a successful eradication process. Tillage in the summer is most effective and reduces thick coverage of the weed in the affected area. For growers, allowing the plant to resprout and tilling again right before planting a winter grain or fall crop allows for the most effective approach.

Top Left- Carolina horsenettle berries.
Bottom Right- Close up image of Carolina horsenettle leaflets.

Prevention:

Preventing the spread of Carolina horsenettle is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office at **(530) 822-7500**.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Carolina horsenettle and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.



For more information about Carolina horsenettle, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at: <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/solanum-carolinense-profile/>

For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at: <https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office

