

# Acanthospermum hispidum

## Recognize the problem

Family: Asteraceae (daisy family)

Common names: upright starbur, bristly starbur, goat's head, star burr, Texas cockspur, upright starbur.

**Chichewa:** Nsakambwa, Kamphondo.

Annual herbaceous plant with an erect and rounded stem (30-60 (-90) cm tall), initially green turning brown, dichotomous branching with a branched and shallow taproot, covered in stiff hairs, sometimes sticky.

Leaves: Green, hairy, glands on lower surface, egg-shaped or oval [(2-) 8 (-12.5) cm long and 1-3 cm wide], margins wavy, slightly lobed, or irregularly toothed, in opposite pairs on stem, without or with very short leaf stalks with a winged base up to 10 mm long.

Flowers: Pale yellow-green (6 mm wide), singly on short stalks (1-15 mm long) in the forks of leaves, sometimes also in the forks of branches near the top of the plant.

Fruits: Small, dry, one-seeded, yellowish brown to dark brown star-shaped burr (10-18 mm wide), covered in many short, stiff, hooked spines, with two longer spines (3-4 mm long) at end, held in star-shaped clusters of 7-8.

## Background

Origin: Latin America.

Introduction: Accidentally as a contaminant of seed and commodities.

Habitat: Mainly tropical and sub-tropical regions; on a wide range of soils, but particularly common on very light sandy soils.

Spread: As a contaminant of seed and commodities, on vehicles and animal fur.

Invades: Crop fields, plantations, fallow lands and pastures, roadsides, disturbed areas, wastelands, urban open space, and gardens.

Impacts: This weed can reduce yields because it competes with crops for water and nutrients. Groundnut seed yield can be reduced by as much as 50%. Losses in soja beans were lower when the weed appeared 11-22 days after planting of the crop. It is an alternative host for many crop pests and diseases such as tomato leaf curl virus, tobacco leaf curl virus and groundnut ringspot virus, the causal agent of spotted wilt in tobacco. Although the this weed is generally avoided by livestock, it can be toxic to animals if consumed on a daily basis over long periods of time. The spiny burrs can lodge in the wool of sheep, reducing the quality, and penetrate the hooves of livestock, often resulting in infection and subsequent lameness.

***Acanthospermum hispidum* has been declared as a noxious weed throughout the whole of Malawi in terms of section 15 of Act G.N. 20/1957.**

Pale yellow/green flowers of *Acanthospermum hispidum*. (Photo by © Tom Rulkens, www.flickr.com)



Established plants of *A. hispidum* in the field. (Photo by © Scamperdale, www.flickr.com)



Scientific name(s) > *Acanthospermum hispidum*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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