

Weed Information Sheet:

common burdock

Arctium minus

Identification:

Asteraceae (Aster Family)

Abundant Biennial forb

Height: 30-72" Width: 30-60"

Leaf Arrangement: alternate

Flower: Magenta

Blooms: Mid-summer

Fruit: Bur

Fall Color: Green

The most distinctive feature of burdock is its large basal leaves which can be over 18" long. The edges of the leaves are un-toothed, but often irregular and rippled or wavy. The leaves are pale on the underside and have a distinctive, unpleasant odor if damaged. The flower stalks of mature plants can reach 6' in height, but are more typically around 3'. Multiple large leaves arise from them and the purple flowers are born in clusters. The flowers themselves are pinkish-purple in color and are surrounded by the distinctive hooked spikes that form the spherical clingy seed heads.

The seed pods of cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*) are similar to burdock seeds, however they are shaped more like a football. People commonly use "cocklebur" to describe any clinging seed.



common burdock

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AKA: lesser burdock



Description & Impact:

Common burdock grows in disturbed ground typically in rural settings but also in urban waste areas and disturbed woodlands. When found in woodlands this species is a strong indicator of overgrazing. This aggressive weed is a biennial or short-lived perennial, typically bolting and flowering in the second year, but if growing conditions are poor it will simply continue living a few more years until it has the energy to flower effectively. It dies after flowering. The clingy seeds of this plant inspired the invention of Velcro. Remember how inspirational they are next time you're digging them out of your socks. The roots are edible and also purported to have medicinal qualities.

Control Methods:

Manual: For an individual plant, use a sharpned shovel or Parsnip Predator to cut the root below the soil surface as deep as possible, and then pulling the top of the plant out by hand.

Mechanical: For larger areas infested by burdock, mow them while they flower, before any of the flowers have closed-up. Repeated mowing will be required to control resprouting plants. For plants that have already gone to seed, carefully clip the seed heads off and removing them from the site to reduce the establishment of new plants.

Chemical: Spot spraying is recommend in most cases to avoid damage to neighboring plants, and the large leaves of burdock make this an easy task. Young burdock can be killed with a foliar spray of glyphosate (RoundUp®, etc.). Do not spray so much herbicide that it drips off on to nearby plants.

If you need to avoid harm to desirable grasses, a broadleaf-specific herbicide containing triclopyr (Garlon®) will be effective. Herbicides containing aminopyralid (Milestone®) or clopyralid (Transline®) will be effective even at a very low spray volume.

Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Citations: