

# *Solanum torvum* Sw.

## Family:

**Solanaceae**

Swartz, O.P. (1788) *Nova Genera & Species Plantarum seu Prodrromus* : 47. Type: Jamaica, Swartz s.n.; holo: S? Fide W. G. DArcy, Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard. 61: 860 (1974).

## Common name:

Nightshade; Soushumber; Devil's Fig; Fig, Devil's; Turkeyberry; Terongan

## Stem

Usually flowers and fruits as a shrub about 1-4 m tall.

## Leaves

Recurved, downward pointing, wide-based spines 3-6 mm long, present on the twigs, similar but straight spines may also occur on the petioles and lower surface of the leaf blade. Twigs, petioles and both the upper and lower surfaces of the leaf blades clothed in stellate hairs. Leaf blades about 8.5-15 x 6-10 cm, margins 4-lobed, each lobe +/- triangular, petioles about 1.5-5 cm long. Lateral veins (about 4-7 on each side of the midrib) raised on the upper surface of the leaf blade.

## Flowers

Inflorescence branched, 50-100-flowered. Pedicels about 5-10 mm long, mainly glandular hairy. Calyx 3-5 mm long, lobes about 2-3 mm long, outer surface mainly glandular hairy with perhaps some stellate hairs interspersed. Corolla about 20-25 mm diam., outer surface stellate hairy. Anthers bright yellow, about 5-7.5 mm long.

## Fruit

Fruits globular, about 10-15 mm diam., calyx persistent at the base. Seeds about 1.5-2 mm long, testa smooth or slightly ornamented. Embryo +/- U-shaped or hook-shaped, cotyledons about as wide as the radicle.

## Seedlings

Cotyledons elliptic, about 6-8 x 3-4 mm. First pair of leaves alternate, clothed in simple (?) hairs. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade margin coarsely toothed or lobed, each lobe +/- triangular in outline. Stem, petiole and both the upper and lower surfaces of the leaf blade clothed in stellate hairs. Stem may or may not be armed with recurved wide-based spines. Seed germination time 11 to 12 days.

## Distribution and Ecology

An introduced species originally from the West Indies now naturalised in NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards as far as north eastern New South Wales. Altitudinal range in CYP and NEQ from near sea level to 800 m. Usually a weed of farm land but also grows in disturbed areas and along roads and other clearings in rain forest. Also occurs in New Guinea and other tropical regions of the world. This species now appears to form part of the diet of Torresian Imperial-Pigeons (*Ducula bicolor*) and this is rather surprising in view of the fact the these pigeons normally feed in the rain forest canopy.

## Natural History & Notes

This species is suspected of poisoning stock but the evidence is not convincing. (Everist 1974).

According to Ochse (1931) the ripe fruits are used in Indonesian cuisine.

This species is sometimes used as a root stock for grafting in the cultivation of Egg Plant (*Solanum melongena* L.).

## Synonyms

***Solanum largiflorum* C.T.White**, *Queensland Agricultural Journal Series* 28: 170(1918), Type: Queensland, Kin Kin, March 1916, C. T.White & W. D. Francis s.n.; syn: MEL, NSW.

## RFK Code

3222



Flower. © Barry Jago



Leaves, flowers and fruit. ©

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Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



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