Jimson weed is an annual, reproducing by seeds, which is variously known as Jamestown weed, stinkwort, thornapple, and trumpetplant. It is widespread across the United States and southern Canada, but is more troublesome in southern North America. It was introduced from South America as an ornamental.

Jimson weed is found on silty or gravelly soils in low areas, fields, and waste places such as dumping grounds. Stems (1) grow 2 to 4 feet tall. They are smooth, stout, and widely branching. Leaves are oval, with shallow, irregularly toothed margins. Leaves occur alternately on thick stems. They have a distinct foul odor.

Flowers (2) are large, either white or purplish, funnel (trumpet)-shaped and 2 to 5 inches long. They are borne singly in the axils (junctures) of leaves.

After flowering, the unique seed pod (3) develops. It is ovoid with a crease extending from the base over the end and down the other side. The pod is covered with short, sharp spines. It measures about 1 inch in diameter. Many dark-brown seeds (4) contained in four sections of the pods, are circular, flat, and wrinkled. Seeds are permitted to fall when autumn dryness causes the pod to curl back along the crease and release the seeds.

Roots are thick and fleshy, very much branched, and shallow. There are two related southwestern species: the desert thornapple, Datura discolor, and the sacred datura, D. meteloides, which are readily distinguished as Datura spp. by the funnel-shaped flowers or the spiny seed pod, but these species differ in size and coloration. All Datura spp. are members of the Nightshade family, Solanaceae, renowned for members which possess poisonous properties. All parts of the jimson weed plant are poisonous when eaten by man or animals. Some sensitive individuals contract dermatitis (skin rash) when they touch jimson weed.

Jimson weed is easily controlled with 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T. Many seeds of this weed which lie dormant in the soil necessitate continuous controls with these herbicides year after year for several seasons before complete control is achieved. Of course, jimson weed is vulnerable to soil sterilants.

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