

# Tropical soda apple

Prohibited invasive plant

Look. Report. Protect. 13 25 23



- It is illegal to keep, cultivate, transport or sell tropical soda apple in Queensland.
- Multi branched shrub with large lobed leaves covered with white thorn-like prickles up to 12 mm long.
- Flowers are white with five recurved petals, white to cream-coloured stamens.
- Immature fruits are mottled light and dark green like a watermelon and ripen to yellow.
- Easily confused with other *Solanum* weed species.
- Early detection and reporting helps protect Queensland's natural environment.

## Description

Native to South America, tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*) is an upright, branching, perennial shrub growing to 2 m in height. It has broad-based, straight, cream-coloured prickles to 12 mm long scattered on most plant parts. Flowers are white with five recurved petals, white to cream-coloured stamens. Mature fruit are yellow and golf ball-size (2–3 cm in diameter). When immature they are pale green with dark green markings, like immature watermelons. In the USA mature plants produce an average of 45 000 seeds per annum.

## Biosecurity risk

Tropical soda apple is a prohibited invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Prohibited species must be reported immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Tropical soda apple is very adaptable and is able to survive in a wide range of habitats. Tropical soda apple has become a major pest in Florida, which has a similar climate to southern Queensland. In Florida, it has invaded at least 500,000 ha and costs landholders an estimated \$6–15 million per annum in control costs and lost production. Tropical soda apple currently found in New South Wales has the potential to spread into Queensland through cattle movement.

## What should I do?

If you think you have seen tropical soda apple, report it immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or scan the QR code to access our reporting web page. Until an authorised officer contacts you, please take reasonable and practical steps to prevent tropical soda apple from spreading.

## More information

Contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).





## Similar looking non-native *Solanum* species

### Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*)

- An erect, spreading shrub up to 1.5 m high.
- Stems are purple or green to brown, covered in broad based prickles up to 12 mm long.
- Leaves alternate along branches, oblong-to-oval in shape with deep, rounded lobes.
- Flowers are purple, 2.5 cm in diameter, 5-lobed.
- Fruit is green with white mottling, then yellow when ripe, 3.5 cm in diameter, bitter and poisonous.

#### Key feature different to tropical soda apple

- Flowers are purple.



### Giant devil's fig (*Solanum chrysotrichum*)

- Large coarse thorny shrub up to 5 m high.
- Stems and undersides of leaves are thickly covered with rusty hairs.
- Leaves up to 30 cm long, 20 cm wide, usually deeply divided into pointed lobes.
- Stems, leaf stalks and leaf veins with scattered large broad based prickles.
- Flowers are white, star shaped with yellow stamens, carried in stalked clusters near the leaf joints.
- Fruits are round, 12 mm across, yellow when ripe.
- Seeds are light brown, 2.3–2.8 mm long.

#### Key feature different to tropical soda apple

- Fruit forms in clusters.

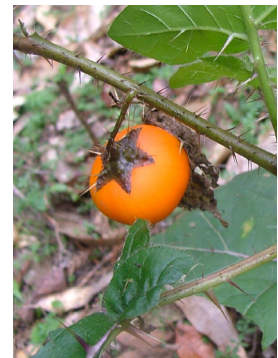


### Devil's apple (*Solanum capsicoides*)

- Annual or short-lived prickly, spreading perennial shrub up to 1 m high.
- Prickles up to 12 mm long – slender.
- Leaves broadly ovate, lobed, 15 cm long and wide.
- Flowers are white, 20–40 mm long.
- Fruits are bright orange-scarlet when ripe, 20–35 mm in diameter.
- Seeds are pale yellow or light brown, 4–6 mm in diameter.

#### Key feature different to tropical soda apple

- Fruit is red-orange to scarlet.



Photos courtesy of Sheldon Navie

### Devil's fig (*Solanum torvum*)

- Spreading, scrambling shrub up to 3 m high with hairy stems.
- Scattered broad based prickles, 3–7 mm long.
- Leaves broadly oval-ovate, lobed, 10–15 cm long, 8–10 cm wide, petiole about 2–5 cm long.
- Flowers are white with yellow stamens, groups of 50–100, on peduncles arising from the stem between the leaves.
- Fruits are round, yellow, up to 15 mm in diameter.
- Seeds are yellow or brown, 2–2.5 mm long.

#### Key feature different to tropical soda apple

- Flowers have yellow stamens.



Photos courtesy of Sheldon Navie