

Cal Poly Humboldt

## Digital Commons @ Cal Poly Humboldt

---

Botanical Studies

Open Educational Resources and Data

---

2022

### Mechanically Injurious Plants

James P. Smith Jr

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/botany\\_jps](https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/botany_jps)



Part of the [Botany Commons](#)

---

# MECHANICALLY INJURIOUS PLANTS

James P. Smith, Jr.  
 Professor Emeritus of Botany  
 Department of Biological Sciences  
 Humboldt State University

April 2020

It is useful to distinguish between poisonous plants that contain or absorb one or more toxic substances and those that can cause mechanical injury by virtue of sharp-pointed plant parts that can become the sites of irritation and infection. In other instances, it is fruits that get stuck in the mouth, throat or esophagus, as in the Osage-orange. Many animals suffer when stems and leaves eaten in excess accumulate to form masses of only partially digested stems and leaves in the gastrointestinal tract. These masses are called bezoars – phytobezoars if composed of plant materials and zoobezoars if formed from animal hair. The bezoars can become quite large and weigh a few hundred pounds. Humans also suffer from bezoars.

Scientific Name • Common Name	Plant Part	Mode
<i>Anemone patens</i> • wind flower	bezoars	O
<i>Aristida</i> spp. • three-awn grass	awns	P
<i>Avena fatua</i> • wild oat	awns	P
<i>Bidens</i> spp. • stick-tights	spines (fruits)	P
<i>Bromus</i> spp. • brome grass	awns	P
<i>Cenchrus</i> spp. • sandbur grass	burs	P
<i>Centaurea</i> spp. • star thistle	spines	P
<i>Croton setigerus</i> • turkey mullein	bezoars	O
<i>Elymus</i> spp. • wild-rye	awns	P
<i>Hordeum</i> spp. • wild barley	awns	P
<i>Maclura pomifera</i> • Osage-orange	fruits	O
<i>Pisum sativum</i> • garden pea	bezoars	
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i> • sycamore	bezoars	O
<i>Rubus</i> spp. • blackberry	prickles	P
<i>Rubus</i> spp. • blackberry	fruits	O
<i>Solanum rostratum</i> • buffalo bur	burs	P
<i>Stipa</i> spp. • needle grass	awns	P
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> • puncture vine	burs	P
<i>Trifolium</i> spp. • clover	bezoars	O
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> • mullein	bezoars	O
<i>Xanthium</i> spp. • cocklebur	burs	P

O • obstruction of throat or gastrointestinal tract  
 P • penetration of skin, eye sockets, etc.