

Caesalpinia decapetala

Catsclaw, pōpoki, wait-a-bit, Mysore thorn, puakelekino

Caesalpinia decapetala (Roth) Alston
Syn. *C. sepiaria*

Family: Fabaceae

Description: Sprawling, climbing bramble, arching stems, to 60 ft long. Stems and leaves with prickles curving downward. Leaves bipinnately compound, 3–15 pairs of secondary leaf stems, each secondary stem with 5–12 pairs of leaflets, leaflet 0.8 inches long. Flowers in upright clusters, each 1 inch diameter, petals 5, yellow. Pods brown, slightly swollen, to 4 inches long, containing 4–9 black seeds, 0.5 inches long. Named in honor of Andrea Cesalpino, 16th century Italian physician to Pope Clement VIII and a botanist⁽⁷⁰⁾; *decapetala*, 10-leafed⁽⁵⁾, reference unclear.

Distribution: From tropical Asia. Serious infestations in northeast South Africa⁽²²⁾. Introduced into Hawai‘i as a natural fence. Collected on O‘ahu in 1910. Occurs in moist forests, pastures, waste lands, and roadsides on Ni‘ihau, Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Maui, and Hawai‘i⁽⁷⁰⁾. It also occurs on Moloka‘i.

Environmental impact: Forms impenetrable brambles, climbs high up trees. Closes off pastures to animals, impedes passage in forests. A hazard to animals, which can become trapped in thickets.



Management: Sensitive to foliar applications of glyphosate and triclopyr, and to soil applications of tebuthiuron. Adequate coverage of catsclaw foliage in dense infestations is difficult. Timely repeat applications (3–9 months) of triclopyr ester at 0.25 lb/acre allows gradual reduction and opening of the canopy and eventual control. This strategy not only stresses the catsclaw over a longer period but also controls newly germinated catsclaw seedlings. Basal bark of accessible stems may be treated with triclopyr ester at 20% product in diesel or crop oil in very-low-volume applications.