

Nicandra physalodes

Apple of Peru

Nicandra physalodes (L.) Gaertn.

Family: Solanaceae

Description: Large erect annual herb to 6 ft tall. Leaves alternate, ovate, 2–8 inches long, 1–4 inches wide, margins dentate, irregularly lobed, upper surface sparsely hairy, lower mostly smooth. Flowers pale blue with a blue spot at the base of each lobe. Berries pale yellow, 0.8 inches diameter, covered by papery calyx. Many seeds. Each plant capable of producing 16,000–44,000 seeds. Poisonous. Seed cannot germinate unless the seed coat is broken and thus can remain dormant for years. Genus named in honor of Nicandor, a Greek poet who wrote about poisonous plants in the second century B.C.; *physalodes*, bladder-like covering for the inflated calyx covering the fruit^(25, 69, 70).

Distribution: From Peru. A weed of crop lands throughout the world in temperate and tropic zones. Naturalized in Hawai‘i before 1871. In Hawai‘i, infests dry to mesic disturbed environments on all the inhabited islands except Lana‘i and Ni‘ihau^(25, 70).



Environmental impact: Suspected to have poisoned livestock (Burt Smith, Univ. Hawai‘i, retired).

Management: Susceptible to hormone-type herbicides especially at young stages of growth, and probably to tebuthiuron, as are other solanaceous species.