



# Velvetleaf *Abutilon theophrasti* Medik.

**Common Names:** velvetleaf, Indian mallow, China-jute, butterprint, pie-maker, abutilon-hemp, buttonweed, Tientsin-jute, velvetweed

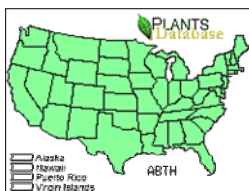
**Native Origin:** A native of China and presumably introduced into the U.S. from India as a fiber crop.

**Description:** Erect annual shrub-like herb in the Mallow family, with leaves and stems covered with hairs. Leaves are alternate, heart-shaped, and gradually tapering to a point (acuminate). Leaves are approximately 2 to 6 inches long and wide, densely hairy on both surfaces, and have toothed margins. Leaf veins originate from a common point (palmate venation), and leaves emit an unpleasant odor when crushed. Erect stems are covered with soft hairs, reach 7 feet in height and are mostly unbranched. Flowers are solitary, approximately 1/2 to 1 inch wide, and consist of 5 orange-yellow petals. Velvetleaf reproduces from seeds that are produced in a circular capsule fruit (1 inch in diameter). Each capsule contains a ring of 'prickles' around the upper edge and yield 2 to 3 seeds. Taproots with fibrous root systems anchor the plant.



**Habitat:** It occurs along roadsides, ditches, hillside slopes, riverbanks, disturbed areas, and crop fields.

**Distribution:** Velvetleaf grows throughout the continental United States as indicated on the Plants Database Map. It is reported invasive in MI, OR, VA, and WA.



**Ecological Impacts:** It is cultivated as a source of fiber and oil; however, it has escaped cultivation to become an invasive species of orchards, cotton, corn, soybeans, and vegetable fields causing serious damage. Velvetleaf seeds exhibit dormancy which can enable them to survive over 50 years in the soil. This non-native is not a top invader in many areas, but it is invasive on very disturbed ground.

### Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Seedbed tillage, rotary hoeing, cultivation, are effective but short term where seed are buried
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled Post-emergence herbicides. Repeat applications may be necessary to reduce densities. Follow label and state requirements. Managers should evaluate the specific circumstances of each infestation, seek professional advice and guidance if necessary, and use the herbicide in a manner that is consistent with the product label and other state requirements
- **Natural Enemies:** Ten fungal species and six arthropods are reported to affect this plant.

**References:** <http://plants.usda.gov>, <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/Weeds/g681.htm>  
Virginia Tech Weed Identification Guide-[www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed\\_id/abuth.htm](http://www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed_id/abuth.htm)  
Invasive Plants of Asia Origin Established in the US and their Natural Enemies p. 1-2  
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