

# Field Facts: Burcucumber



- **Common names:** Burcucumber
- **Scientific name:** *Sicyos angulatus*
- **Grass or broadleaf:** Summer annual broadleaf
- Native to the United States
- Resembles a cultivated cucumber
- Burcucumber can be identified by its hairy, heart-shaped leaves and long vines.<sup>1</sup>
- Burcucumber has separate male and female flowers (monoecious) that are white to pale yellow in color.<sup>2</sup>
- Burcucumber develops forked tendrils, which can wrap around and climb up whatever the weed is able to reach, to attain sunlight.<sup>1</sup> Vines can grow over 20 feet long and twine around corn plants. The weight of the vines can lodge corn, making it difficult to harvest.<sup>3</sup>
- The fruit on the plant are typically produced in clusters of three to 20 and resemble cucumbers covered with bristles.<sup>1</sup>
- The weed is typically found in low-lying areas near creeks and rivers, but it can be found on upland areas.

## Fast facts

- When burcucumber grows in direct competition of soybeans, it can reduce yield up to 48%.<sup>1</sup>
- Burcucumber plants emerging in June can produce up to 42,000 seeds per plant.<sup>2</sup>
- The hard seed coat the weed produces contributes to the prolonged seed dormancy, which means that fields infested with burcucumber will have a lasting seed reservoir in the soil and the potential for a burcucumber problem for many years.<sup>4</sup>
- Burcucumber can germinate and emerge from soil depths up to 6 inches.<sup>4</sup>

## Control/management tips

- To control burcucumber, follow a weed management program that includes residual herbicides and timely applications.
- Farmers should look at their weed spectrum and select products that have the most effectiveness on their troublesome weeds. For burcucumber, if the selected postemergence product can be tank-mixed with a residual product, farmers may want to consider this treatment for a final postemergence application.
- At harvest, farmers should take care not to transport seed from an infested area to other parts of their fields or other locations. Farmers and retailers should initially bypass those areas in the field with the combine, return to them at the end of harvest and then follow with a thorough cleaning of the combine.
- Use no-till in fields affected with burcucumber seeds. No-till allows burcucumber seeds to remain toward the surface, reducing the amount of time the seeds can germinate.

<sup>1</sup>Bradley, Kevin. "Weed of the month: Burcucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*), an Agronomic Pest on the Increase." Integrated Pest Management, University of Missouri, September 23, 2014, <https://ipm.missouri.edu/cropPest/2014/9/Burcucumber-An-Agronomic-Pest-on-the-Increase/>.

<sup>2</sup>Bauman, Tom, Bill Johnson, and Glenn Nice. "Burcucumber Control." Purdue University Extension Service, Pest and Crop, March 25, 2005, <https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/pestcrop/2005/issue2/index.html#burcucumber>.

<sup>3</sup>Jha, Prashant, and Rebecca Vittetoe. "Managing Burcucumber in Corn and Soybean." Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, November 4, 2022. <https://crops.extension.iastate.edu/cropnews/2022/11/managing-burcucumber-corn-and-soybean>.

<sup>4</sup>Curran, William, Dwight Lingenfelter, and Dave Messersmith, "Managing Burcucumber in Agronomic Crops." Penn State Extension, September 22, 2021. <https://extension.psu.edu/managing-burcucumber-in-agronomic-crops>.

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