



Silverleaf Nightshade

O & T Guide W-15

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Cooperative Extension Service College of Agriculture and Home Economics October 2006

Silverleaf nightshade, *Solanum elaeagnifolium*, is a native perennial herb or with star-shaped, purple flowers and small, orange fruit. Its stems are usually covered with short, yellow or red thorns. The leaves and fruit of the plant are toxic to livestock and humans if ingested. It is also known as desert nightshade, melloncillo, prairie berry, silverleaf bitter apple, tomato weed, and trompilla.

The stems are erect, can grow up to 3 ft., and are covered with tiny, star-shaped hairs (visible with 20x magnification) that make the stems appear gray-green or silver. The stems are often covered with small yellow or red thorns about 0.1-0.2 in. long. The lance-shaped leaves are 0.8-6.0 in. long with smooth or wavy edges, and are silver or gray-green in color. The lower leaf surfaces often feel velvety because of the dense covering of star-shaped hairs.



Silverleaf nightshade produces distinct star-shaped flowers that are 0.8-1.2 in. in diameter, and purple to blue in color with a yellow center. The small, round seed pods are light to dark yellow-brown or orange in color (green when immature), smooth and glossy, 0.10-0.15 in. long and 0.07-0.10 in. wide. The plant grows from deep vertical roots and creeping horizontal roots. It can reproduce through seed as well as vegetatively through its creeping perennial roots.





Management:

- Physical removal must remove as much of the root system as possible
- Weekly mowing before seed production can prevent seed spread and reduce competitiveness
- Herbicides are effective

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