

Asian Copperleaf

Asian copperleaf (*Acalypha australis* L.) is a new species to the Midwest, found in crop fields and urban settings. While it is unknown how populations initially spread to Midwestern crop fields, it spreads readily via seed and moves across landscapes with water. This species has been found in crop fields in north-central Iowa, northwestern Illinois, and southern Minnesota.

Asian copperleaf is an annual, herbaceous plant that reproduces only by seed. It forms dense monocultures, survives in partial shade, and is often discovered at harvest between crop rows. Reports from its native range note several herbicide resistances in populations. Researchers, agronomists, and farmers are concerned due to Asian copperleaf's rapid spread by unknown means, its persistence in crop fields, and possible future herbicide resistance development.



Vegetative plants can be difficult to distinguish from Asian copperleaf's relatives. Photo by Meaghan Anderson, Iowa State University

How to Identify Asian Copperleaf

Identifying Asian copperleaf before reproductive structures are present can be difficult. Asian copperleaf and its relatives in Illinois and Iowa have leaves that alternate along the stem with serrated margins and pointed tips and bases that are slightly to very rounded. Stems are erect. Flowers in all species are not showy. Female flowers and developing fruits have leafy tissue known as bracts that grow beneath them. These bracts are important for distinguishing Asian copperleaf.

- Cotyledons are largely round and sometimes have a notch at the tip.
- Young leaves have a reddish color that turns a deep green.
- Early leaves may have rounded tips and nearly smooth margins.
- More developed leaves have widely spaced teeth on leaf margins and turn shiny green.
- Enter reproduction in late summer to early autumn
- Typically, one to two feet tall



Asian copperleaf seedlings often germinate in dense clusters underneath the crop canopy. Photo by Meaghan Anderson, Iowa State University

- Bracts at the base of female flowers or fruits are key to identification:
 - Larger than any Illinois or Iowa relatives; some are more than three-quarters of an inch long
 - Very shallow teeth (20 or more per bract)
 - Heart-shaped or egg-shaped; tip tapers to a point

Management Considerations

Limiting seed production and seed movement is critical for limiting future infestations.

Fields containing Asian copperleaf should be harvested last to avoid seed movement through harvesting equipment. For producers who identify Asian copperleaf in a field after harvest operations are complete, thoroughly clean the combine to reduce seed movement to the next field to be harvested.

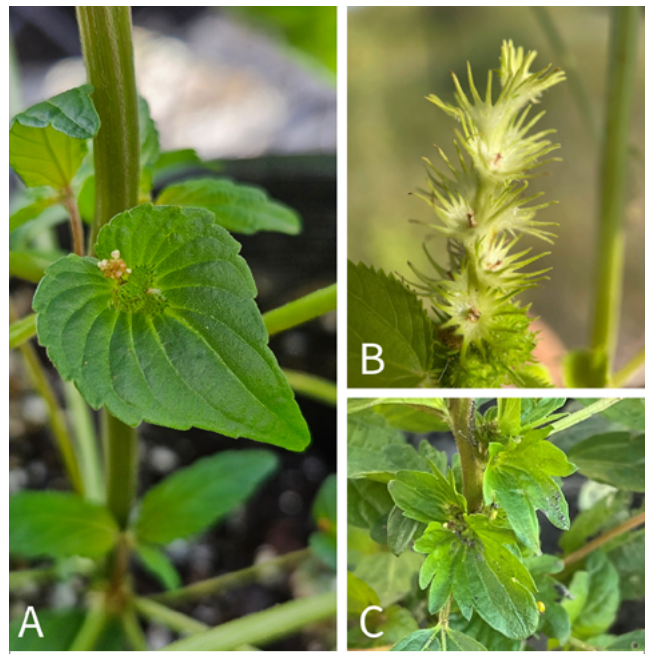
If fall or spring tillage is part of the crop production plan, till fields containing Asian copperleaf last to avoid moving seed on tillage equipment to other fields.

Be cautious about grazing livestock in fields containing Asian copperleaf, as seeds could be moved through livestock manure after the animals are moved to other locations.

Report Suspected Populations

For individuals who believe they have found Asian copperleaf, collect site details and report online to [EDDMapS \(eddmaps.org\)](https://eddmaps.org).

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Comparison of bracts of Asian copperleaf, which are large and egg- or heart-shaped with shallow “teeth” (A), hophornbeam copperleaf, which have several narrow, finger-like extensions called lobes (B), and rhomboid mercury, which have five to nine lobes (C). Photos by Meaghan Anderson, Jack Dash, and Aaron Hager

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