

Citrus Weed Spotlight

Showy Crotalaria *Crotalaria spectabilis*

By Stephen H. Futch, David W. Hall and Brent Sellers

LIFE CYCLE: herbaceous annual, 3–6 feet tall, a summer annual northward, can be found in all seasons southward

LEAVES: unifoliate, alternate, very short-stalked; blades 1–2 inches long and up to ½ inch wide, broadly elliptic to wedge-shaped, hairless above but densely hairy below

STEM: green, erect, stout, branched, with fine hairs, usually ribbed

FLOWER: pea-shaped, bright yellow in terminal racemes on main stem, about ¾–1 inch long and wide

FRUIT: legume, cylindrical pod with inflated appearance, about 1 ¼–1 ¾ inches long, ¾–¾ inch wide, turns black at maturity

SEEDS: kidney-shaped with notch at base, turning shiny black at maturity

PROPAGATED BY: seeds

GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS: upright growth, prefers full sun, produces more than 2,000 seeds/plant

COMMENTS: both dry and green plant parts are toxic to livestock and fowl; found in cultivated and abandoned fields and along fencerows; found throughout Florida, west to Missouri and Texas and north to Illinois and Virginia; native of southern Asia. Seeds become loose in pods as they mature and rattle when shaken, giving the plant the common name of showy rattlebox in some resources.

CONTROL: Bromacil, indaziflam, norflurazon, pendimethalin and simazine provide pre-emergence control of showy crotalaria emerging from seed. Glyphosate, paraquat dichloride or premixes containing 2,4-D provide good to excellent postemergence control of small plants.

Stephen H. Futch is a University of Florida multi-county Extension agent at the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred; David W. Hall is a retired botanist with the University of Florida departments of botany and natural sciences in Gainesville; Brent Sellers is a University of Florida associate professor at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center at Ona. 🍌

