

Citrus Weed Spotlight

Balsam apple or balsam pear vine

Momordica charantia

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

LIFE CYCLE: Annual or weak, short-lived perennial vine

HEIGHT: Climbing, 10 feet to 30 feet long or high, can easily cover the tops of 20-foot-tall citrus trees in a single season if not properly controlled

LEAVES: Alternate, petioles 1 to 2 1/3 inches long; blades smooth to hairy, rounded, deeply five- to seven-lobed, to 4 3/4 inches wide; lobes rounded to pointed; margins large with teeth

STEM: Slender, with twisting threadlike tendrils at nodes, usually twines

FLOWERS: Yellow, usually borne singly on a stalk; petals rounded or indented at the tip, to one-third-inch long; male and female flowers separate, male flowers typically smaller than female flowers

FRUIT: Egg-shaped, to 4 inches long, green and then golden yellow to bright orange at maturity, covered with bumps; splits open to reveal seeds

SEEDS: Elliptic, flat, three-eighth-inch to one-half-inch long; enclosed in bright red pulp

PROPAGATED BY: Seeds

COMMENTS: Tendrils present opposite of leaf; native to the old world tropics; pantropical; cultivated in temperate and tropical regions; fruit is used as a vegetable; all parts of the plant are used medicinally

CONTROL: Standard pre-emergence herbicides including diuron, indaziflam, norflurazon and simazine should provide suppression of emerging seedlings. Postemergence control with glyphosate is enhanced when applied in combination with 2,4-D, carfentrazone or saflufenacil, if adequate coverage is achieved and plants are small. However, once balsam apple vine gets entwined into the tree canopy, herbicides offer little control. 🍌



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