

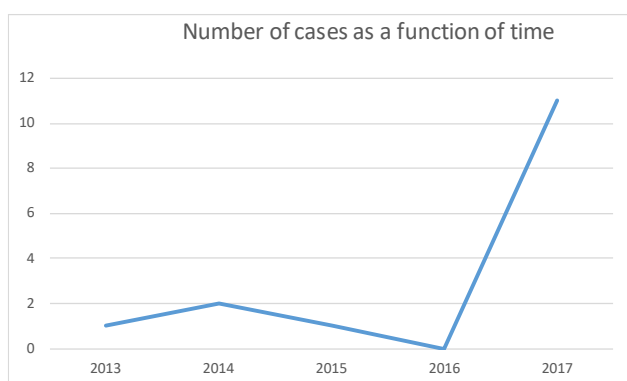
## Jimsonweed or "the flowers of evil"

*Datura* is a genus of plants well known for their majestic trumpet-shaped flowers. It is often grown in gardens for ornamental purposes. Some species such as *Datura stramonium* L. (jimsonweed) also grow in the wild and, because they are spread by the wind, sometimes end up in unexpected places. The fruit is a capsule (see photo 1), 5 to 10 cm in diameter, covered with tapering spines and containing several hundred seeds.

This plant contains toxic substances in its leaves, flowers and seeds. These substances (which include scopolamine, atropine and hyoscyamine) cause symptoms combining neuro-psychic signs (hallucinations, agitation or even coma with convulsions) and neurovegetative effects (dry skin and mouth, fever, cardiac signs, etc.). The clinical picture can be particularly severe in children. Despite this plant being highly dangerous, it is misused for its hallucinatory properties, particularly by some adolescents who consume it recreationally because the plant is ubiquitous and easily accessible.

Following the occurrence of several cases of severe *Datura* poisoning in August 2017, French Poison Control Centres (PCCs) alerted the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES). A national extraction of PCC data showed an upsurge in cases in 2017, mainly in Nouvelle Aquitaine (see photo 3).

The poisoned patients interviewed reported finding jimsonweed near their homes in urban areas. The implementation of new regulations<sup>1</sup> may explain why these plants are growing in towns and cities (Figure 1) more often than in the past.



**Figure 2:** Jimsonweed poisoning: data from the Nouvelle Aquitaine Poison Control Centre (Source: SICAP)



Photo 1 : Jimsonweed fruit (Source: P. Rolland, CIRE)



Photo 2 : Jimsonweed growing naturally in an urban area (Photo: Dr A. Daveluy, CEIP-A)

Following this report, information was sent to the Ministry of the Interior by the Directorate General for Health, with a view to asking municipalities to remove *Datura* plants, especially in places frequented by young people. In Nouvelle Aquitaine, the PCC, the regional intervention unit (CIRE) of *Santé Publique France* and the centre for evaluation and information on drug dependence and addiction monitoring (CEIP-A), in conjunction with the Nouvelle Aquitaine regional health agency (ARS), forwarded this request to municipal professionals in charge of maintaining green spaces for application in their daily work.

**Magali LABADIE (Bordeaux Poison Control Centre)**

1. Labbé Act amended by Article 68 of the Energy Transition Act and the Potier Act prohibiting, as of 1 January 2017, the use of plant protection products by public authorities for maintaining green spaces, forests, walkways and roadways accessible or open to the public.