

# Discover the Flora of Our Campus

## Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*)

Black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*) is an annual herbaceous plant belonging to the family Solanaceae. It is usually a low-growing plant, reaching 20–80 cm in height, with soft and branching stems. Its leaves are ovate or oval-shaped, with smooth or slightly toothed edges. The flowers are small, white, and star-shaped. The fruit is a small berry that turns black or dark purple when ripe. In some cases, the plant spreads as a wild weed.

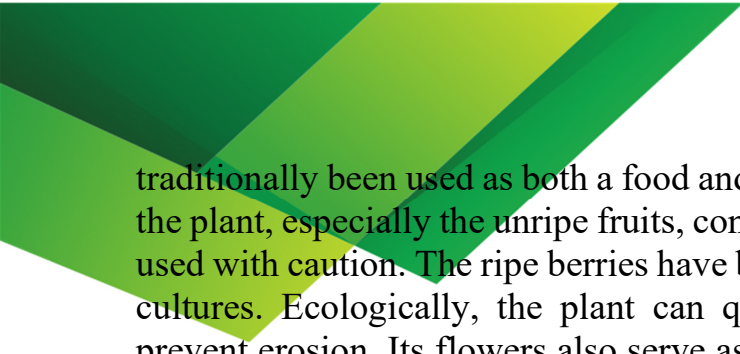
*Solanum nigrum* is a cosmopolitan plant widely distributed across many regions of the world. It can be found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In Azerbaijan, it grows naturally in gardens, cultivated fields, roadsides, and wastelands. Since the plant can adapt to different climatic conditions, it is capable of growing across a very broad geographical range.

Black nightshade grows well in sunny and partially shaded areas. It is not very



selective regarding soil type and can even thrive in poor soils. It has moderate drought tolerance, although it develops more rapidly in moist conditions. The plant reproduces by seeds and is often regarded as a weed spread through human activity. It shows rapid growth during its vegetation period.

In some regions, *Solanum nigrum* has



traditionally been used as both a food and medicinal plant. However, certain parts of the plant, especially the unripe fruits, contain toxic alkaloids and should therefore be used with caution. The ripe berries have been cooked and consumed as food in some cultures. Ecologically, the plant can quickly cover bare soil and partially help prevent erosion. Its flowers also serve as a nectar source for pollinating insects. On the other hand, in agricultural fields it may compete with cultivated crops as a weed and negatively affect productivity.

Black nightshade has mainly been used in ethnobotany and traditional medicine. In some areas, its leaves have been cooked and eaten as a vegetable. It has also been traditionally used to treat inflammation and certain skin conditions. Modern scientific studies investigate the plant's bioactive compounds, although today it is generally approached with caution due to its potentially toxic properties.

One of the most interesting characteristics of black nightshade is that it can be both beneficial and potentially poisonous. Different stages of the plant's development may produce different effects. Another interesting fact is that *Solanum nigrum* was used in ancient cultures as both food and medicine and was sometimes known as a "wild vegetable." Overall, *Solanum nigrum* is an ecologically adaptable and chemically intriguing wild plant that should be handled carefully.

