

# Melon Loco

(Family Cucurbitaceae, *Apodanthera undulata*)

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These gourd producing vines are common in SPRNCA. They are coarse, dark green plants that have prostrate trailing stems as long as approximately 10 feet. Their leaves are roundish or kidney shaped, approximately 2-6 inches wide, and have irregular jagged edges or pleats. During approximately June to September the plants produce yellow flowers that have five lobes that are each about 1 ½ inches long. Each plant produces both male and female flowers. The male flowers occur in loose clusters while the female flowers are solitary, larger than the males, and on younger parts of the stems. Pollinated female flowers produce cords that are spherical or oval and approximately 2 ½ to 4 inches long. The gourds are initially dark green with about 10 longitudinal ridges and as they mature turn yellowish. Melon Loco plants are perennial, die back in the winter, and then grow back from the large root when weather becomes warmer.

The shape of the leaves of Melon Loco distinguishes this plant from Buffalo Gourds that have triangular shaped leaves and Finger-leaved Gourds that have leaves with central silvery white markings on the tops of the five narrow fingerlike segments of each leaf. The gourds of Melon Loco differ from those of the other two gourd producing species by having longitudinal ridges.

Melon Loco plants occur at elevations from approximately 1500 to 5500 feet in dry soils that are often sandy or gravelly, in dry grasslands, and along roadsides. The geographical range of this species occurs from Arizona westward into Western Texas and southward into southern Mexico.

The proper English common name for *Apodanthera undulata* is Melon Loco or Melon-Loco. Spanish common names are Calabaza Amarga (for the *australis* variety of this species) and Calabaza de Coyote. The common names Coyote Melon and Coyote Gourd properly refer to *Cucurbita palmata*. The latter species is not known from SPRNCA. It occurs in sandy areas below approximately 4000 feet and has a geographical range extending from southeastern California to western Arizona and Baja California.

## References

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Melon Loco plant with loose centrally located clusters of male flowers. .



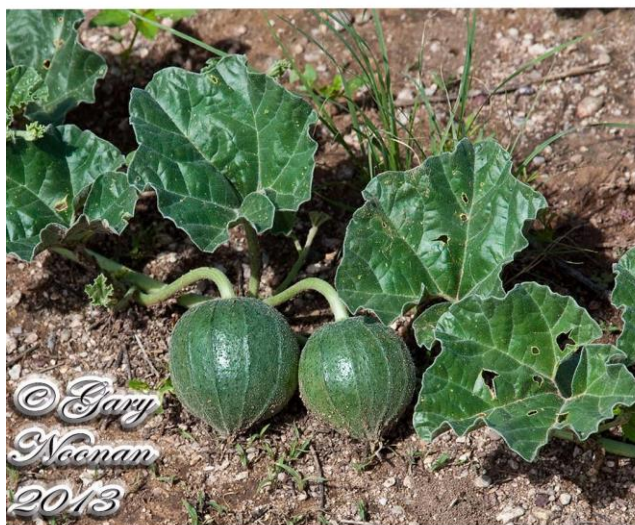
Melon Loco female flower on younger stem.



Melon Loco male flowers.



Melon Loco young gourd.



Melon Loco gourd more developed.



Melon Loco nearly ripe gourd.