

# Bagpod (Bladderpod), *Sesbania vesicaria* (Jacq.) Ell.<sup>1</sup>

David W. Hall, Vernon V. Vandiver and Brent A. Sellers<sup>2</sup>

## Classification

Common Name: Bagpod (Bladderpod)

Scientific Name: *Sesbania vesicaria* (Jacq.) Ell.

Family: Leguminosae (Fabaceae), Bean Family

## Seedling

The stems are thick and smooth (Figure 1). The cotyledon blades are oblong, thick and smooth, with a midvein depression visible on the upper surface and the midvein distinct on the lower surface. The cotyledon petioles are short. The leaves are alternate. The first leaf is simple. Each additional leaf is even-pinnately compound with 8 or more leaflets. The individual leaflets have short, minute stalks. The central rachis has a groove on the upper surface. The petiole has two stipules. The opposite leaflets are pressed together during early development.

## Mature Plant

*S. vesicaria* is a robust, smooth-stemmed annual, growing to 4 m tall, with few or no branches (Figure 2). The stem tips have dense white hairs. The leaves are alternately arranged and are once even-pinnately compound. The leaves may be as long as 30 cm. Each leaf may have from 20-40 leaflets. The leaflets have smooth margins and are narrowly oblong to elliptic in shape. The leaflets may be up to 3 cm long and 6 mm wide and very hairy when expanding, becoming



Figure 1. Seedling, Bagpod (Bladderpod), *Sesbania vesicaria* (Jacq.) Ell.

smooth at maturity. The stipules are not persistent. The flowers occur in the axils of the leaves. The bracts and bractlets are not persistent. The calyx tube is hairy when young, becoming smooth at maturity, and is 2-3 mm long. The corolla is 6-9 mm long. The petals are yellow and quite variable in color, often tinged with pink or red. The fruit is a dry, smooth, inflated pod, from 3-6 cm long and 1.5-2 cm wide. Each pod usually contains 2 seeds.

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2. David W. Hall, former extension botanist, Herbarium, Florida Museum of Natural History; Vernon V. Vandiver, associate professor emeritus, Agronomy Department; Brent A. Sellers, assistant professor, Agronomy Department, Range Cattle Research and Education Center--Ona, FL; Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Mature plant, Bagpod (Bladderpod), *Sesbania vesicaria* (Jacq.) Ell.

## History

*Sesbania* is from the word *Sesban* which is thought to be the name of an Arabic genus. *Vesicaria* is from Latin, meaning inflated or bladder-like, and refers to the fruit.

## Habitat

*S. vesicaria* occurs in pastures, along fencerows and generally in any disturbed, moist to wet area throughout Florida, northward to North Carolina, westward to Texas, primarily on the coastal plain, and inland to Oklahoma and Arkansas.

## Biology

Bagpod contains sesbaimide, which is concentrated in the seed. Fresh green plants are unpalatable, but the mature dry seedpods and seeds are consumed. Animals pastured with the plant during the growing season are seldom poisoned, but naive ruminants, especially goats and cattle, are often poisoned when they are introduced to the dried plants in the fall and winter. Clinical observations indicate that newly mature seeds are more toxic than those that have weathered on the plant. Bagpod frequently grows in mixed populations with *S. exaltata*. Bagpod has fewer leaflets, smaller flower, and different fruit shape compared to *S. exaltata*.