

Translation from "*Etnobotanik. Planter i skik og brug, i historien og folkmedicinen. Vagn J Brøndegaards biografi, bibliografi og artikler i udvalg på dansk (2015)*" meaning «*"Ethnobotany. Plants in customs, history and folk medicine. Vagn J Brøndegaard's biography, bibliography and selected articles in Danish'* (editor: Håkan Tunon)

Original article: *Ur Vor Viden* 1954, s. 753-759

Here in Western Europe agricultural botanists have in recent years become interested in two weeds, burdock (*Arctium*) and cocklebur (*Xanthium spinosum*) both belonging to the large Aster family. In southern Germany, particularly in the Danube basin, there has since 1951 been trial cultivation of a particularly large weed, namely burdock. The giant stems are processed into cardboard and hard fiber boards, and is already used in several houses in Bavaria. As the stems are low in lignin, they can be readily broken down by rolling whilst steaming, and it is fortunate that the seed oil is perfectly suitable to cure the fiber plates! Finally, the root contains large amounts of inulin, which can be converted to fructose. Therefore, nothing goes to waste. It is also important to breed "shake-proof" varieties, since the seeds fall out by the slightest wind movement, something that also had to be overcome when one began to cultivate opium poppies in Europe. It may be interesting to know what demands burdock plants have on the soil. Since they develop enormous leaves, the need for potash is large, but this returns more or less without loss back to the ground under plant decay. Nitrogen consumption is not large either, the very deep roots ensuring a good harvest even in dry summers. As the plants wilt, the roots shrink to half the volume, this having a beneficial venting and breaking up of the the upper soil layer where the plow can't reach, and in turn a myriad of beneficial microorganisms use these channels to penetrate deeper into the ground. Finally, the 2-4m high burdock plants in treeless areas help to reduce wind erosion. The dense leaf volume also maintains humidity and kills all weeds.