

## CROWN OF THORNS

*This fast-moving spider-like creature has at least 10 long legs and a central body as big as a pony's. From top to bottom it is covered with stiff hairs, like tiny quills, making it seem like it's made entirely of thorns. No eyes are visible, but a sharp beak flexes and drips fluid from its underside.*

## CROWN OF THORNS

**CR 4**

Chaotic Neutral Large Magical Beast

**Init** +8; **Senses** Blindsight 60 ft., +2, Spot +2

**AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 13

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural); see also *urticating hairs* below

**hp** 45 (6HD);

**Weakness** Fire

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

**Evasion**

**Spd** 50 ft., (10 squares); **Climb** 40 ft. (8 squares)

**Space/Reach:** 10ft./5ft.

**Melee** bite +10 melee (2d6+7 and poison; Fort save DC 16; paralysis 2d6 rounds/2d6 minutes)

Base Atk +6; Grp +15

**Atk Options** leap attack

**Abilities** Str 20, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 7

**Feats** Ability Focus: Urticating Hairs, Improved Initiative, Combat Reflexes

**Skills** Climb +13, Hide +7, Jump +30, Move Silently +3

**Environment** Almost any, but ancient forests and mountainous trails are preferred.

**SQ** Urticating Hairs

**Organization** solo

**Treasure** None

**Advancement** 7-9HD (large), 10-12HD (huge)

**Leap Attack (Ex)** [full-round; at-will]

*The creature leaps at least 10 feet onto its prey as a charge, biting, and then making a simultaneous overrun attempt to force its prey to the ground.*

**Jump** 3.5PH pg.77; +30 to jump check; standing jump take 10 distance is 15 feet.

**Bite** +12 melee, 2d6+7 damage and poison; -2 to Crown of Thorns' AC for 1 round.

**Overrun** 3.5PH Pg.157; +11 to strength check; if surprised or paralyzed from the bite the target cannot take its AoO or get out of the way.

**Urticating Hairs (Ex)** [free; automatic reaction every time the crown of thorns is attacked]

*The creature's many legs rasp against each other vigorously, releasing a cloud of thick hairs into the air that irritate the skin and eyes of other creatures.*



**Hairs** 5-ft. spread, DC 18 fort save or suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls, saves, or skill checks for 3 rounds. This effect is not cumulative.

**Weakness to Fire** If a fire attack that fills the crown of thorns' entire space successfully deals damage to it, the hairs covering its body burn away, robbing the creature of its *urticating hairs* defense, as well as its *blindsight*.

**Skills** The crown of thorns' many legs provide a +12 racial bonus to Jump checks, and its hairs and colouring provide a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks. It also has a +8 racial bonus to climb checks, and can always choose to take 10 on climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

The crown of thorns is an aggressive, predatory combination of porcupine, spider, and squid that can paralyze and carry off a victim before its prey knows what is happening. The crown of thorns—also called the rasper or spined leaper by those familiar with it—prefers to attack prey from above, but is quite capable of running down food if necessary.

There are two kinds of stiff hairs covering the crown of thorns—the detachable urticating hairs it uses as a deterrent and defence mechanism, and another set of long, incredibly fine hairs that are so sensitive to air currents that they can detect creatures up to 60 ft. away. It uses this second type of hairs almost exclusively as it hunts, only relying on its relatively average eyesight when it must. If these hairs are burnt away or lost to illness, they grow back within one week, during which the crown of thorns switches its diet to carrion or small prey.

A forge-like metabolism powers the crown of thorns' frenetic hunting, requiring it to feed constantly. Fortunately the creatures move around a lot, but whether this is to avoid overtaxing a given supply of prey or just to satisfy their wanderlust is unknown.

## CROWN OF THORNS TACTICS

A crown of thorns leap attacks with surprise whenever it can, hoping to paralyze its target. The first round of combat should then open with the crown of thorns grabbing its prey and retreating at top speed. If the target resists the poison but is prone, the crown of thorns will try to bite it again and escape. If the target resists the poison and the overrun attempt, it's likely that the crown of thorns will leap away to look for another opening.

The crown of thorns is canny enough to target lone or isolated prey, but otherwise doesn't make many distinctions. If its hairs are burnt off it will try to escape immediately, only continuing a battle if the odds are even.

## CROWN OF THORNS LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Knowledge:Arcana check.

**DC 16:** This is a crown of thorns, a predatory magical beast. This result reveals all magical beast traits.

**DC 21:** The crown of thorns is also known as a spined leaper. It prefers to leap onto its prey from above, releasing a cloud of irritating hairs from its body as it fights.

**DC 26:** The crown of thorns seeks to incapacitate its foes with its poisonous bite so it can carry them off to be devoured. The hairs covering its body not only defend it, but some are so sensitive that they can sense changes in air pressure from a great distance, letting it locate its prey.

**DC 31:** A successful area of effect fire spell will burn away the leaper's hairs, leaving it much more vulnerable. In this condition it will probably try to escape rather than continue a battle.

