

Blackberry

Rubus fruticosus agg.



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Rubus fruticosus agg. (L. Vervoort)



Rubus fruticosus, blackberry, in flower, Kinloch, Lake Taupo, January 2003 (C. Howell)

Also known as:

bramble, *Rubus laciniatus*, cut-leaved blackberry, many *Rubus* synonyms

Where is it originally from?

Northern temperate regions.

What does it look like?

Scrambling, very thorny, semi-erect shrub that is usually deciduous, with large root crowns and long suckers. Stems arching (occasionally semi-prostrate), entangled, green or red and occasionally layering. Various shaped (usually cut-edged), flat leaves are arranged alternately on the stems. White to pink 5-petalled flowers appear from November to April followed by clusters of black berries from November to May.

Why is it weedy?

Forms dense, long-lived clumps, scrambles over the ground and low plants, has an extensive rhizome system, occasionally layering and seeding. Tolerates most soil types, drought and flood but is intolerant of dense shade.

How does it spread?

Mostly spread by rhizomes. Birds distribute seeds but they have a low germination rate.

What damage does it do?

Low to moderate damage in open habitats. Smothers most low growing species, inhibiting the establishment of native plant seedlings, and impedes access.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Stream and bush edges, swamps, sedge and tussock land, gumland, and other open habitats.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out (small patches only) (all year round). Dispose of root crowns and rhizomes at a refuse transfer station or burn or bury deeply.
2. Stem scrape and paint with undiluted glyphosate immediately. Small patches only.
3. Cut and paint stumps: glyphosate (200ml/L to 500ml/L). Small patches only.
4. Spray (summer-autumn, before leaves become brittle): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (7.5g/15L) or Tordon Brushkiller (60ml/15L) or triclopyr 600 EC (60ml/15L).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Recovers quickly after slashing or grazing as crowns and rhizomes remain unaffected. Rhizomes are difficult to dig out and always regrow. Since the early 1990s the leaf rust *Phragmidium violaceum* has caused widespread loss of vigour. Combined with insect damage to leaves and roots, this may be enough to reduce competitiveness in many sites with high native plant numbers. In habitats with terminal species over 3 m, native species will usually overtop blackberry, so usually no control needed except on the margins. Where control necessary, slashing improves access preceding dense planting, but small plants may be smothered by regrowth. Spraying preferred, gives 95%+ control with negligible regrowth. Spray at least 4 months before planting.