

False tamarisk

Myricaria germanica

Family Tamaricaceae



Identification

- Clump-forming woody shrub (1 to 2 m tall).
- Small overlapping leaves (similar to conifers).
- Clusters of small pink flowers at the tips of the stems in summer.
- Fluffy seeds which are spread by wind and water.
- In winter the leaves die off leaving just the bare stems.



False tamarisk. Photo: H. Braithwaite (DOC).



1. False tamarisk flowering. 2. False tamarisk seedling. Photos: H. Braithwaite (DOC).

Where is it found?

False tamarisk is usually found in braided riverbeds. In New Zealand it has only been found in Canterbury. It is widespread in parts of the lower Rangitata and Rakaia rivers and below the Waimakariri Gorge. Infestations in the upper reaches of the river systems have also been found; these may have been started when seeds or stems were accidentally moved on off-road vehicles and boats.

Why is it a problem?

False tamarisk can be spread by flooding to form dense stands that affect river flows. It re-grows easily from stems or roots. False tamarisk is of greatest concern in relatively-pristine upper river systems. Here it may displace native species and change the natural character in braided rivers by colonising areas with little or no vegetation, changing natural river flows and potentially assisting other weeds to establish.

Similar species

Chinese tamarisk (*Tamarix chinensis*) seedlings look similar but grow up to 10 m tall, have finer leaves and the flowers can be anywhere on the stems (i.e. not just on the ends).

Control

Small seedlings can be pulled out but it is difficult to remove all the roots of older plants. Spraying with glyphosate is effective. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil and waterways.



False tamarisk growing in the Waimakariri River (below Gorge Bridge). Photo: A. Paltridge (DOC).