

Sweet Briar

Rosa rubiginosa



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Rosa rubiginosa, sweet briar, close up of flower and foliage, Kinloch, Lake Taupo, January 2003 (C.Howell)



Rosa rubiginosa, sweet briar, close up of fruit, Cowcliff Conservation Area, Kawarau Gorge, Queenstown (C.Howell)



Rosa rubiginosa, sweet briar (Plant Protection Society)

Also known as:

sweet briar, eglantine, briar rose, *Rosa eglanteria*

Where is it originally from?

Europe, North Africa

What does it look like?

Deciduous, erect, occasionally dense, woody shrub to 3 m (occasionally 5 m) tall with stout branched roots that often sucker. Many arching stems grow from the base, with few to many, unequal, flattened, downward-pointing, curved thorns. Apple-smelling leaves are hairless dull-green above, hairy below, and divided into 5-9 narrow-oval leaflets (12-40 x 8-28 mm). Clusters of 1-3 pink (or bright pink with whitish base) rose-like, 5-petalled flowers (25-40 mm diameter) appear from November to January, followed by prominent, egg-shaped, shiny red or orange-red rose hips (12-22 x 10-18 mm) from February to May.

Why is it weedy?

Long-lived seed is occasionally well dispersed and spread is also by suckers. Tolerates drought, hot to very cold temperatures, wind, low fertility, most well-drained soils and damage (little grazed). Can dominate the canopy.

How does it spread?

Mostly via suckers and also by bird-dispersed seed. Abandoned gardens, poor and drought-prone pasture, roadsides, and river flats are all common sources.

What damage does it do?

Forms dense, long-lived stands in tough, open habitats, inhibiting or preventing the seedlings of native species from establishing. Can alter riverbeds, causing flooding. Requires moderate to high light levels, and invades only open sites or badly degraded forest.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Tall and short tussockland, shrubland, riverbeds, stabilised screes, steep open slopes, well drained sites, dunes, and bare land, mainly in drier eastern areas.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Cut down and paint stump (summer-autumn): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (1 g /L).
2. Dig out (all year round): small patches only. Dispose of root crowns and rhizomes at a refuse transfer station or burn or bury deeply.
3. Spray (full leaf stage): glyphosate (100ml/10L) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant) or Tordon Brushkiller (50ml/10L).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Suckering roots and crowns resprout after spraying and cut stumps resprout. Grazing does not control plant, merely eliminates plant competition. Exclude livestock, maintain control of rabbits and other browsing pests. Planting sites can minimise seedling regrowth. Do not replant for at least 4 months after spraying.