

Evergreen Buckthorn

Rhamnus alaternus

Evergreen buckthorn (also commonly known as rhamnus) is an aggressive weed which has the ability to form dense colonies. Evergreen buckthorn smothers young native plants, prevents native seedling establishment and can completely dominate coastal cliff habitats, displacing Pohutukawa. It can also alter the structure of native forest ecosystems due to its ability to achieve 80 to 100% ground cover in a relatively short period of time. Often only ferns and karaka seedlings can survive.



Status

Evergreen buckthorn is a declared plant pest in all areas of the Auckland Region which lie outside Motutapu, Rangitoto and Motuihe Islands. It is a Total Control Plant Pest, which means that land occupiers are required to control infestations of this plant should it be found growing on their land. The aim is to reduce the impacts of this plant on the environment by ensuring that land occupiers control infestations in situations where it is causing problems. The sale, propagation, distribution and commercial display of Evergreen buckthorn is prohibited.

Origin

Evergreen buckthorn is native to the Mediterranean. It was introduced as an ornamental plant, and is often mistaken for native species. It was first recorded in the wild in 1930 and occurs in Auckland City and on the islands of the inner Hauraki Gulf and associated coastal areas. Evergreen buckthorn is also present in Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago.



Description

Evergreen buckthorn is an evergreen tree that grows up to 10 metres in height. Its stout stems have dark brown thick furrowed bark when old, but on younger plants it is pale (often purplish) and thin. It has glossy green, leathery oval shaped leaves that often have serrated or toothed edges and prominent veins.

The flowers are inconspicuous, pale green, and fragrant, occurring from May to November. A glossy red berry is produced, which turns black when ripe, containing pale white seeds. Evergreen buckthorn usually has trees of separate gender, distinguished by the presence of male (no stigma) or female (stigma) flowers. However, there is some mixing of gender apparent on some individual trees.

Invasion

Evergreen buckthorn is spread when birds, possums and other animals eat the berries, distributing the seeds further afield in their droppings. However, many seeds are shed close to the parent plant, and in the past, humans have also cultivated and spread the plant.

Evergreen buckthorn prefers growing in areas with a Mediterranean type climate (summer drought and intermittent winter rain), particularly coastal areas and bare rock. It can also grow beside streams, on forest margins, islands and shrublands.

Control

Evergreen buckthorn can be controlled physically by pulling out the smaller plants and seedlings - making sure the tap root is removed. The vegetation can then be composted or mulched.

pestfacts

Larger plants can be controlled by;

- (a) Cutting down the tree and treating the stump with herbicide; or
- (b) Applying herbicide around the base of the trunk from ground level to a height of approximately 60cms

Herbicide mixtures that can be used for this type of control are:

- **Escort**10gm + 20ml penetrant (e.g. Pulse) per 1 litre water
- **Grazon**50mls per 1 litre diesel

Dense infestations of smaller plants can be treated with an overall spray using the following herbicide mixture:

- **Grazon**
Knapsack.....100mls per 10 litres water

Care should be taken not to confuse desirable species with Evergreen buckthorn.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide read thoroughly to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

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