

Wandering Jew

Tradescantia fluminensis

Wandering Jew is a serious forest floor competitor that prefers shade. It is difficult to control and spreads very rapidly. Wandering Jew's dense mats smother all native ground covering plants and prevents other species from establishing, including most regenerating native seedling trees. The plant also causes allergic dermatitis in dogs and other animals walking through mats of this plant.



Status

Wandering Jew is no longer permitted to be sold, propagated, distributed or commercially displayed within the Auckland Region as it is now declared a Regional Surveillance Plant Pest.

The objective is to prevent its further spread by human activities. Land occupiers are encouraged to remove or control this plant growing on their land but without legal obligation.

Origin

Wandering Jew is native to South America. It was popular as an ornamental groundcover and hanging basket in New Zealand, but when its over vigorous nature was realised, its popularity waned and the problems began as it was disposed of with little care. It was first recorded in the wild in 1916, at Awanui in Northland, and first recorded in the Auckland Region in 1919. It is now widespread throughout the region in bush remnants, reserves and many rural stream banks.



Description

Wandering Jew is a dark green, succulent, creeping carpet up to 50cm thick. A hairless trailing plant, it has oval, shining leaves (3-6cm) with very short stems. Wandering Jew produces clusters of small, white, three petalled flowers from August to November. Generally, seed is not produced in New Zealand.

Variiegated varieties of this plant are also present in New Zealand, however many of these are the same species which readily revert to the green form.

Invasion

As Wandering Jew does not normally produce seed in New Zealand, it tends to spread vegetatively. That is, fragments of the succulent stems break easily and regrow. They will root readily at the stem nodes. Stem fragments may be broken off and washed downstream in flood waters. Dumped garden rubbish often infests bush and reserves. Roading machinery such as graders and mowers may also spread the plant.

Wandering Jew grows in damp and shady places, but is not tolerant of frost. It can often be found along cool, moist and shaded stream banks, and also grows in lowland forests, coastal areas and inshore islands, wetland margins, and disturbed forest floors.

Control

Small areas of Wandering Jew can be satisfactorily controlled. If the plant is in a confined area, physical removal is possible especially in dry or drought conditions. Wandering Jew can be raked or handpulled. The most effective control is to gather up the material and dispose of the vegetation by burying deeply. Do not attempt to compost or mulch it, as fragments can survive composting and prolonged exposure to the sun.

pestfacts

For larger infestations, herbicide spraying may help to control it.
The following mixtures are suitable for knapsack application:

- Glyphosate (Roundup G2 or Nufarm).....200mls + 10mls Pulse per 10 litres water
- Escort.....5gms + Glyphosate 100mls + Pulse 10mls per 10 litres water
- Grazon60mls + 10mls Pulse per 10 litres water
- Yates Hydrocotyl Killer150mls YHK + 10mls Pulse per 10 litres water
- Renovate120mls per 10 litres water (no pulse reqd.)
- Amitrol 4L200mls + 10mls pulse per 10 litres water

Note: Grazon, Yates Hydrocotyl Killer, Amitrol 4L and Renovate are the most effective herbicides. However, Glyphosphate is the safest to use within 5 metres of waterways, but overspray may affect adjacent native plants. Whichever herbicide is used, repeat applications will be required until the infestation is totally eradicated.

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

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