

Cathedral Bells

Cobaea scandens

Cathedral bells is a fast growing dense vine which smothers and prevents the establishment of native species. Cathedral bells suppresses the growth of native seedlings and can also damage or kill larger plants because of its blanket effect. It usually destroys its host vegetation, and can seriously modify the structure of our forests.



Status

Cathedral bells is of low incidence within the Auckland Region and containment or eradication is considered possible, utilising specialist expertise in identification and cost effective control methods. It is on this basis that Cathedral bells is declared a Service Delivery Plant Pest. This means that the ARC will carry out the required control work on behalf of, and at no cost to, the affected landowner. Each season, plants will be treated by expert staff at regular intervals to ensure that all infestations are controlled, reduced in size and eventually eradicated.

Cathedral bells is also banned from sale, propagation, distribution or commercial display. Should you see this plant please report it to the Auckland Regional Council which will arrange for its control.

Origin

Cathedral bells is native to South and Central America and was introduced as a garden ornamental. It has since naturalised in New Zealand and was first recorded in the wild in 1946. Currently it can be found in a small number of sites in the Auckland Region. It is also found in Hamilton, Rotorua, Wellington and Karamea in the South Island.



Description

Cathedral bells is a vigorous, perennial climbing plant growing from shallow roots. It has hairless, entire (not toothed or cut), light green oval leaves with prominent purplish veins. The stems are branched, woody at the base, and often purplish when young. The stems are often up to 10m long but less than 2cm in diameter. The large, round, purple lantern-like flowers are found on twining purplish stems, generally from August to May. They produce large oval fruit 6 to 10 cm long, exploding during summer to release winged seeds.

Invasion

Cathedral bells is spread by wind dispersed seeds over short distances, and by water, soil or gravel over longer distances. It can also spread through vine fragments in water or in dumped garden rubbish. Occasionally the plants will root from the nodes on the stems, where they touch the ground.

It is susceptible to frost and heavy shade. It forms a dense mat, and has the potential to become a major weed in tall and undisturbed forests, natural open areas, scrub, forest remnants, hedgerows, roadsides, riverbanks, gardens, shelterbelts and disturbed native forests.

Control

The best way of eradicating single plants is to trace the vines back to the roots, loosen soil with a hoe or spade and pull vine out with roots attached. Hang vines up in tree trunks to wither and die. Any vines trailing along the ground must be removed and burnt or else they may take root and establish new plants.

pestfacts

If removal of roots is not practical the vines can be cut as close to the root as possible, and the rooted ends treated liberally with one of the following herbicide mixtures:

- Yates Woody Weedkiller - 1 part per 4 parts water
- Banvine - 1 part per 4 parts water

Again, care must be taken that no vines are left trailing on the ground.

Where cathedral bells is rambling over waste ground or the infestation is too large to trace the vines back to the roots, an overall foliage spray is generally a more practical option. The following mixtures give effective control of cathedral bells;

- Grazon
Handgun600mls per 100 litres water.
Knapsack120mls per 10 litres water
- Banvine
Knapsack120mls per 10 litres water
- Glyphosate (Roundup G2 or Nufarm) (seedlings only)
Knapsack200mls per 10 litres water

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

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