pestfacts

Auckland Regional Council
TE RAUHITANGA TAIAO

Ivy

Hedera helix ssp. helix

Ivy is a climbing perennial, with the potential to completely carpet the forest floor and climb to the tops of the tallest trees, smothering them. Therefore it causes irreversible changes to local environments by suppressing most plant regeneration.

Status

Ivy is no longer permitted to be sold, propagated, distributed or commercially displayed on the basis that it is now a Regional Surveillance Plant Pest within the Auckland Region. The objective is to prevent its further spread by humans. Land occupiers are encouraged to control infestations of this plant without legal obligation.

Origin

Ivy is native to temperate Europe and Asia and was introduced to New Zealand as an ornamental species, being first recorded in the wild in 1873. It is now found throughout the North Island and parts of the South Island. In the Auckland Region ivy is thought to have naturalised between 1940 and 1970 and is now common throughout.

Description

Ivy is an ornamental evergreen, part of the creeping vine family which are grown for their foliage. Ivy can climb to 30 metres. The stems climb or creep by hold-fast roots and the leaves are arranged in one plane. The plant also produces non climbing fertile branches with quite different leaves. Fertile branch leaves are usually unlobed and are arranged spirally around the stem. Leaves of non-fertile shoots are five lobed, sometimes multi-coloured.

Ivy flowers are bisexual and appear after four to five years. They appear on the fertile branches in rounded, umbrella shaped, clusters with yellowish-green petals. The berry-like fruits are bluish-purple to black when ripe and contain two to three seeds. All parts of the plant are poisonous to eat and can cause contact dermatitis to people with sensitive skin. Ivy dust may cause sneezing and eye problems. (Please note this plant is not poison ivy, Rhus radicans.)

Invasion

Ivy is spread when birds eating the fruit distribute the seeds in their droppings. Just as important has been the impact of human activity, especially the careless dumping of surplus trimmings from gardens. (Roots can sprout all the way along its creeping stems.) So, ivy is easily propagated and has the potential to sprout from dumped fragments. Established infestations increase in size from the outward growth of these creeping stems.

Ivy is a very long-lived species and persists over time. It is shade, frost and damp tolerant, and can be found growing in wasteland, river beds, stream beds, cliffs and open forest, as well as urban gardens.

Control

- **Hand Removal**

  Small or young ivy plants can be pulled off supporting structures/trees, and roots dug out. Wear gloves, as ivy is a mild contact skin irritant. To avoid resprouting, dispose of plant material at an authorised refuse collection site.

  Ivy can also be controlled with herbicides, but with some difficulty.

- **Cut Vine Treatment**

  Trace vines back to rooting material and cut less than 20cm above ground and immediately paint onto cut vines either:

  Escort.....5g per 1 litres water, OR
  Tordon Brushkiller .....1 part per 10 parts water or diesel

  Knapsack application
  Escort.....5g + 10mls Pulse (wetting agent) per 10 litres water
  Glyphosate (Roundup) ....100mls + 10mls Pulse (wetting agent) per 10 litres water

NOTE: Ivy is difficult to kill particularly when growing over desirable vegetation. Use cut vine treatment wherever possible. Repeat applications usually required for 100% control.

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