

Chilean rhubarb

Gunneraceae - *Gunnera tinctoria*



What does it look like?

Chilean rhubarb is a giant, rhubarb-like herb with huge prickly leaves that can reach up to 2.5m tall. Summer green herb with large prickly umbrella-type leaves which span over 2 m in length. In winter, it dies back to large creeping stems and large, brown/red sausage-like flower spikes that are up to 1m tall covered with flowers followed by small orange/ round fruit 1.5-2mm long.

Favours coastal and wet ground conditions, tolerant of salt spray and resilient to a wide range of soil, and climatic conditions, however, most common in high rainfall areas.

Most commonly spotted: Grows new leaves in spring (upright), flowers in summer.

Why is it a problem?

Classed as an environmental pest due to being highly invasive, where one seed head can contain over 80,000 seeds. Chilean rhubarb can also grow from rhizomes (stem that grows roots), these trees can out shade other species, resulting in dominating their environment.

Fruit can be dispersed by birds, and forms dense patches that exclude virtually all other plants.

Management programme

- Site-Led
- National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA)

Rules

- Council will work with landowner/occupier, including developing agreements for the effective management of this pest to protect the values of specific sites.
For more information about this Rule, refer to our Regional Pest Management Plan page 44, under Related Links.
- Where a land occupier is carrying out pest control under our Regional Pest Management Plan, the adjacent landowner/occupier within 50m of a boundary shall destroy any pest plant within 21 days of being notified by Council.

Control methods

Note that it is important to dispose this plant at a transfer station as leaving on site has the strong likelihood of establishing new re-growth.

1. Remove flower spikes and dispose at landfill (all year round).
2. Pull out seedlings (all year round).
3. Dig out individual plants or small patches (all year round): Ensure removal of all fragments and flower/seedheads and dispose of these at a refuse transfer station.

For agrichemical control for refer to: [Chilean rhubarb • Weedbusters](#)

More information

Similar species: Brazilian giant-rhubarb (*Gunnera manicata*) has membranous webbing between the lobes and is also considered weedy in some areas.

There are no known native plant species with a similar appearance.