

Monkey apple

Syzygium smithii

What does it look like?

Monkey apple is a tree (<6-15 m tall) with smooth bark and oval, leathery leaves (4-12 x 2-5 cm) which are in opposite pairs along the stems. The leaves are glossy on top and dotted underneath, and are very aromatic when crushed and often become scaly. Whitish flowers (Oct-Jan) are followed by bunches of pink-mauve or white berry-like fruit with large seeds.

It is a long-lived species (100 yrs +) and produces a lot of seed that is well dispersed. Birds (especially pigeons) spread the seed, and seedlings are shade-tolerant and form dense stands that crowd out other species. It grows much faster than native species, any gaps in the bush canopy that are created by older native trees dying are rapidly filled by any monkey apple seedlings that may be present. Prefers moderate to highly fertile, well-drained soil, but tolerates frost, salt, drought and wind. Grows faster than native hardwoods.



Why is it a problem?

Monkey apple forms dense carpet of seedlings under canopy, which grow after a gap in the canopy is created by windfall or possum damage etc to become a permanent canopy species. Can form almost pure stands, and is likely to invade disturbed (occasionally intact) forests, shrublands and fernland, usually under pigeon roosts.

Control Methods

Physical control

Hard to kill. Pull or dig seedlings (all year round). Leave on site to rot down.

Herbicide control

Cut and squirt (all year round) or bore and fill: Make 1 cut or hole every 10 cm around the trunk, apply a slurry of metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (2g) to each cut or hole. Or,

Cut down and paint stump (all year round): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L). Or,

Frill (continuous cut): treat with metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (4g/L + penetrant). Or,

Spray (spring-autumn): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant).

Bared areas reseed profusely. Stumps coppice. Maintain rolling front, follow up at least 6-monthly to control seedlings. Replant densely, using pigeon-friendly species where possible, to minimise seedling growth.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

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Related Links

Weedbusters <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/monkey-apple/>

Rules

Under Section 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 no person can sell, propagate, breed, distribute or otherwise spread any pest in a Pest Management Plan, or any unwanted organism. Not complying with Section 52 or 53 is an offence under the Act, and may result in penalties noted in Section 157(1).

The National Pest Plant Accord is designed to prevent the sale, distribution and propagation of a set list of pest plants (the Accord list) within New Zealand. If allowed to spread further, these pest plants could seriously damage the New Zealand economy and environment.