

# African olive

*Olea europaea subsp. cuspidata*

## What does it look like?

Dense bushy shrub or small tree (<7 m tall) with angular, scaly young stems and bark that becomes rough as it matures. Lance-shaped leaves (5-11 x 1-2 cm) are in opposite pairs on the stem, dark green and occasionally scaly above, and scaly and pale green or silvery underneath (European olive - *Olea europaea* subspecies *europaea* - has white leaf undersides). Whitish, strongly smelling flowers (3-4 mm long) appear from July to March, followed by an ovalish glossy fruit (5-8 mm diameter) that ripens from green to red to black.

Birds, possibly possums and livestock eat the fruit and spread the seeds. Common sources are gardens, hedges and waste places.



## Why is it a problem?

Forms dense (occasionally pure), long-lived stands in open and understorey, and fills canopy in light gaps. Prevents establishment of native plant seedlings.

Produces many long-lived, well dispersed seeds. Tolerates drought, hot to moderate temperatures, wind, salt, damage, and moderate shade. Likely to invade dry disturbed forest and shrubland, bare land, especially in coastal areas, and inshore islands.



## Control Methods

### Physical control

Remove systematically to minimise reintroduction by birds. Pull or dig small plants (all year round). Leave on site to rot down.

### Herbicide control

Cut and squirt (all year round): Make 1 cut every 100 mm around the trunk and apply metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (1g) to each cut. Or,

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

Spray (all year round): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L).

Cut stumps resprout. Plant reseeds in bared areas. Garden and hedge sources should be removed. Avoid soil disturbance, replant bared sites where possible.

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

## Related Links

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

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