

Old man's beard

Clematis vitalba

What is council doing about this?

In the Hutt City area, if old man's beard is encroaching from a reserve onto the property of an adjacent landowner or has become a fire hazard, Hutt City Council will clear the shared boundary of old man's beard. Along the length of Te Awa Kairangi (the Hutt River) Greater Wellington is working towards controlling old man's beard. Please report sightings of man's beard along the riverbanks to pest.plants@gw.govt.nz.

What does it look like?

Old man's beard is a deciduous climbing vine that grows up to 20 metres tall. It has woody stems with six prominent ribs and pale bark that rubs off easily. The leaves are arranged in opposite pairs along the stems, and each is made up of five leaflets. These are sparsely hairy and have bluntly toothed or smooth edges. Fragrant, creamy-white flowers are produced from December to May. Flowers are followed by dense, fluffy clusters of seeds, which persist over winter.

Old man's beard is a light-demanding species. It grows in low forest, scrub, shrubland, riparian margins and in forests with well-lit margins, wide tracks, waterways or clearings. Native species have only three leaflets, no lines or grooves on the stems, and produce flowers from August to December. The native *Clematis paniculata* has pure white flowers, and *Clematis foetida* flowers are yellow.



Why is it a problem?

Old man's beard is a fast-growing vine that eventually smothers and collapses even tall trees and can reduce a forest to an impenetrable, low-growing infestation of the vine. It moves into established forest over the canopy by layering.

Old man's beard produces huge amounts of long-lived seed, which initially have a high viability rate. It also reproduces vegetatively from stem fragments that form roots and resprout, and vines that touch the ground can also take root.

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Control Methods

Herbicide control

Slash thick stems (all year round) at 1 m and ground level (to prevent stump resprouting and aerial roots attaching from hanging stems). Paint cut stumps with glyphosate (250ml/L water) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L water) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (50ml/L water) or triclopyr 600 EC (100ml/L water) or picloram gel. Leave stems in air to die. Dispose of cutaway segments at a refuse transfer station or by burning. Or,

Spray (spring-autumn): glyphosate (20ml/L water) or triclopyr 600 EC (6ml/L water).

Stumps resprout very quickly and cut stems root at nodes. Replant bared areas promptly to minimise seedling regrowth. Check for seedlings at least 6-monthly.

Biological control

Old man's beard leaf miner, leaf fungus and sawfly have all been released in the Wellington region between 1995 and 2002. In 2022 the old man's beard gall mite was also released. Only the leaf miner is widespread in the region. Contact GW for more information.

Related Links

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3721

NZ Flora <http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Clematis-vitalba.html>

Unwanted Organisms Register <http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/624/Old-mans-beard>

Biocontrol <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/biosecurity/weed-management/using-biocontrol/>

GW Regional Pest Management Plan <https://www.gw.govt.nz/environment/pest-management/>

Weedbusters <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/old-mans-beard/>

Hutt City Council pest plant programme <https://www.huttcity.govt.nz/environment-and-sustainability/what-you-can-do/pest-plant-programme>

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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).

An occupier shall, on receipt of a written direction from an authorised person, destroy* all banana passionfruit, cathedral bells, climbing asparagus, old man's beard, and pampas on the land they occupy. This rule only applies to the Hutt City Council territory.

*For the purposes of this rule, destroy means the permanent preclusion of the plant's ability to set viable seed.

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.

Management Programme

Site-led