

Elaeagnus

Elaeagnus x reflexa

What does it look like?

Elaeagnus is a dense, evergreen shrub that can scramble over supporting vegetation or structures to a height of 20m. Young shoots are brown and scaly and older arching stems can have spines. The leaves are up to 90mm long, have irregular wavy margins, and silvery or brownish-scaly undersides. It produces small, drooping clusters of tiny, whitish, fragrant flowers that are followed by pale reddish-orange, berry-like fruits that each contain one ribbed seed.

Elaeagnus is often found in scrub, along forest margins and may be present in pasture or hedges from abandoned homestead gardens.

Why is it a problem?

Elaeagnus smothers the plants it grows over and can invade well-lit or partially shaded sites. It increases soil nutrient status, affecting which native plant species can grow there. Elaeagnus is tolerant to drought and partly tolerant to shade, but requires medium to high soil fertility. Elaeagnus produces small numbers of seeds, but the main method of reproduction is from plant fragments.



Control Methods

Physical control

Dig out with machinery wherever possible. Dry and burn roots and stems or bury deeply. Or,

Cut down and cover the stumps with black plastic to block out all of the light for 6-9 months. Dispose of cut stems at a refuse transfer station. Alternatively burn or bury deeply to prevent resprouting.

Herbicide control

Stump swab (ground level): undiluted Tordon Brushkiller or Vigilant gel. Follow up likewise on suckers. Dispose of cut stems at a refuse transfer station, burn or bury deeply to prevent resprouting or dry and allow to rot onsite. Or,

Drill & fill: drill holes sloping into the sapwood at regular intervals around the tree. As each hole is drilled fill with 20g metsulfuron-methyl (600g/kg) per 1L water or undiluted Tordon Brushkiller. If possible wait until the liquid subsides then apply more. Repeat treatments may be necessary. Or,

Frilling: use a sharp chisel or axe and make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant. Immediately apply undiluted Tordon Brushkiller to the cuts using a paintbrush or a squeeze bottle. Or,

Slashing or use a chainsaw to cut all growth down to ground level. Cut all the bark off the stumps and paint liberally with undiluted glyphosate or Tordon Brushkiller and spray: 100ml tordon brushkiller + 5g metsulfuron-methyl (600g/kg)+ penetrant per 10L water.

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

Related Links

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3872

NZ Flora <http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Elaeagnus-xreflexa.html>

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