

Weed of
National Significance

BLACKBERRY

(*Rubus fruticosus*)



Weed: blackberry



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Why is blackberry a weed?

- Out-competes other species in both agricultural and environmental areas
- Reduces pasture production and provides shelter and food for pests such as foxes
- Restricts access and creates fire hazards due to the large amount of dead material present in the thickets
- Control costs and lost production in NSW, Vic, & SA estimated at \$45 million per annum

Description

Blackberry does best in cool moist sites such as gullies and creek lines, but spreads over large areas in relatively humid climates, particularly on sheltered south-facing slopes and throughout woodland areas, pine forests, roadsides and other disturbed or degraded land.

Plant: semi-deciduous thorny shrub, forms spreading thickets to 3m high

Leaves: leaflets radiate like a hand from a common point of attachment

Flowers: 5 petalled, white or pink, 2-3cm across and similar to a small open rose flower

Fruit: the fruits are large, pitted, succulent, green initially then ripening to red then black

Dispersal via

- Foxes and birds eat the berries and disperse seed in their droppings
- Layering – when the branch tips touch the ground the plant sends up new shoots
- Suckering – plant re-grows from root fragments when they are dug out but the whole root system is not removed

Status

Blackberry is listed as a class 4 noxious weed in all council areas within the Molonglo Catchment. The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled in accordance with local management plans published by each local council and the plant may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed.

In the ACT, blackberry is a class 3 Pest Plant which must be contained.

Blackberry has been listed as a Weed of National Significance due to its invasiveness, potential for spread and socioeconomic and environmental impacts.

Fact sheets are available from the Molonglo Conservation Group website. Visit www.molonglo.org.au or call 62992119 for more information about getting involved in your living environment.

Information used to compile this fact sheet was kindly provided by the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee: www.southeastweeds.org.au

Look-alikes

Native plants can often be confused with weed species. The following information aims to assist you with accurate identification to prevent the loss of our declining natives. If you are unsure what species you are dealing with, take advantage of the identification services on offer from your local weeds officer (either at your local council or the ACT's Parks, Conservation and Lands) before carrying out any controls.

Jackie Miles/Max Campbell



Native: small-leaved bramble

There are several varieties of blackberry, all similar in appearance and all weeds (though not all are declared noxious). **Sweet briar** (*Rosa rubiginosa*) is a similar thorny shrub to about 2 metres high, also a weed (see separate fact sheet).

The native **small-leaved bramble** (*Rubus parvifolius*) is a small trailing plant with pink flowers and small red fruits which grows in woodland and forest and among rocks in native grassland. It is common both on the south coast and the southern tablelands. A notable difference between this native and blackberry is that its spines are small and straight whereas blackberry spines are curved.

Control methods

For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar. Seek advice on chemical application from your Council Weeds Officer or local 'bush friendly' nursery. Always use chemicals as directed on the label.

Spray blackberry with a woody weed specific herbicide. Extensive grazing by goats can provide good control however they can also cause significant damage to any native vegetation present and require good fencing to prevent escape. Slashing can keep blackberry from forming tall clumps but never gets rid of the plant and will require follow up with another control method such as grazing or spraying. Small plants can be dug out, however when doing so be sure to remove all roots or they may sucker.

An introduced fungus, blackberry rust, was released in the 1980s. It can become common in wet summers, and reduces the vigour of plants, causing defoliation which can allow other species to become established among the thickets. Unfortunately, the variety found on the southern tablelands is the least effective for control and it has not established well in the ACT. Contact the Molonglo Catchment Coordinator for information on how to access these biological controls.

No one control method alone is successful.