

# Fire tree

## *Morella faya*

### Family

Myricaceae (wax-myrtle)

### Also known as

*Myrica faya*, candle berry myrtle

### Where is it originally from?

Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands

### What does it look like?

Evergreen shrub or small tree (<8 m) with branches covered with reddish hairs, and long, leathery, dark green, shiny, smooth, aromatic leaves (4-11 cm x 1-2.5 cm) tapered towards the base, with rolled edges that become serrated towards the rounded tip. Flowers are on short, branched spikes amongst the current year's growth; male flowers are in small, hanging clusters near the branch tip, while small, hanging clusters of female flowers are further from the branch tip. Red-black fruit is only slightly fleshy and is warty in appearance.

### Why is it weedy?

Overseas it is a fast-growing tree that forms dense invasive colonies, out-competing native species. Tolerates partial shade, a wide range of soil types from thin ash over lava to deep well-developed silty clay loam, and is a nitrogen fixer so it can colonise poor soils. Wind-pollinated, and seed production is prolific (from 40,000 to 400,000 fruits per year); seed remains viable in the soil for a long time. Not yet naturalized in mainland New Zealand.

### How does it spread?

Fruit is spread by birds and animals.

### What damage does it do?

Invades early regenerating forest and shrublands, and alters the chemistry of the soil by fixing nitrogen, allowing for subsequent invasion by other weeds. Forms a dense canopy with a sparse understorey by shading-out other species and preventing canopy regeneration.

### Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Light gaps in forests, forest edges, agricultural areas, disturbed areas.

### What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Pull out seedlings and small plants (all year round).
2. Cut down near ground level (all year round).
3. Drill and inject: glyphosate (undiluted) or 5-10ml of a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted).

### What can I do to stop it coming back?

Monitor the site for regrowth from the base and seedling growth.



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)



Photo: Trevor James



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