

Old man's beard

Clematis vitalba

Family

Ranunculaceae (buttercup)

Also known as

Travellers' joy, wild clematis

Where is it originally from?

Europe, South West Asia

What does it look like?

Deciduous, climbing, layering vine (<20 m tall) with very long, woody stems with six prominent ribs (appear as furrows in older vines) and pale, easily rubbed-off bark. Leaves are arranged in opposite pairs on the stems, and are made up of five (rarely three) widely spaced leaflets that fall in autumn. Thin, papery leaflets are sparsely hairy and have bluntly toothed or smooth edges. Creamy white, fragrant flowers (2-3 cm diameter, Dec-May) are followed by grey, hairy seeds (2-3 mm long) with distinctive white plumes (3-4 cm long) in dense, fluffy clusters persisting over winter (hence the 'old man's beard'). N

Are there any similar species?

All native clematis species are evergreen, have 3 leaflets (except the leafless *C. afoliata*), unfurrowed stems, and flower from August to December. All exotic species that are found in the wild are deciduous (flowers Dec-May), except the occasionally weedy, pink-flowered *C. montana* (flowers Oct-Dec).

Why is it weedy?

Grows rapidly, forming dense, heavy, masses that dominate canopy of any height. Stems layer profusely, and it produces many long-lived seeds if exposed to frost. Tolerant of cold, moderate shade, damp, wind, salt, most soil types, and damage.

How does it spread?

Seed is spread by water or wind, and both seed and stem fragments are spread in dumped vegetation. Common sources are forests, roadsides, hedgerows, vacant land, and willow swamps.

What damage does it do?

Smothers and kills all plants to the highest canopy, and prevents the establishment of native plant seedlings. Moves readily into established forest over canopy and by layering.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed and open forest and forest margins, shrublands, riverbeds, cliffs, bush tracks, fernland, and tussockland.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Introduce biological control agents wherever weed is common - contact your regional council for more information.
2. 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) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (100ml/L) or triclopyr 600 EC (100ml/L) or triclopyr 120g/L (500ml/L) or a product containing 200g 2,4-D+100g dicamba/L (200ml/L) or dicamba 50g/L (400ml/L) or picloram gel. Leave stems in air to die. Dispose of cutaway segments at a refuse transfer station or by burning.
3. Spray (spring-autumn): glyphosate (20ml/L) or clopyralid (12.5ml/L).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

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.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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