

Spindle tree

Euonymus europaeus

Family

Celastraceae (spindle tree)

Also known as

European spindle tree, common spindle

Where is it originally from?

Europe

What does it look like?

Much-branched, deciduous shrub or small tree (<6m tall) with smooth, grey bark and young branches that are square, green and smooth. Paired oval leaves (2-10 cm) with pointed tips, margins with shallow rounded teeth, and 6-12mm leaf stalks usually turn red in autumn. Flower buds are greenish and usually 4-angled. Clusters of 2-15 flowers (8-10 mm diameter, Nov-Dec) with four narrow and widely separated greenish-yellow petals are followed by 4-lobed, deep pink seed capsules (Mar-May) that ripen to expose bright orange flesh covering each seed.

Are there any similar species?

Japanese spindle tree (*E. japonicus*) is similar but evergreen, with thicker leaves. It has round instead of 4-lobed seed capsules, and bark on young branches becomes wrinkled.

Why is it weedy?

Tolerates a wide range of conditions including shade, warm and cold temperatures, wind, poor soils and moderate to low rainfall. It is poisonous so is not grazed by stock.

How does it spread?

Produces many seeds which germinate freely and are spread widely by birds, and sprouts (suckers) from its root system.

What damage does it do?

Forms dense thickets in the open and in the shade, blocking light and space for native understorey plants and seedlings.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Forest, forest margins, shrubland, scrubland, cliffs, dry sites, hedges, urban areas.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Hand pull small plants and seedlings (all year round). Mulch.
2. Cut and paint stump (all year round): cut stems near ground level and paint stumps with metsulfuron methyl 600g/kg (5g/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (100ml/L) or triclopyr 600EC (100ml/L) or glyphosate (200ml/L).
3. Overall spray (all year round): triclopyr 600EC (60ml/10L + penetrant) or metsulfuron methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Monitor the site for a least a year and treat any regrowth or seedlings (seeds survive more than 1 year in soil). Where appropriate plant a local native shrub or tree.



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Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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