

White poplar

Populus alba

Family

Salicaceae (willow)

Also known as

Silver poplar

Where is it originally from?

Europe, Western Asia

What does it look like?

Deciduous tree (<25m tall) usually spreading with roots that sucker where it is ungrazed. Grey bark is smooth to shallowly fissured, white shoots are covered in down, and white buds are downy but not sticky. Leaves (3-10 x 2-9 cm) on young shoots broadly triangular, with 3-5 lobes; leaves on adult shoots are smaller, oval or circular, lobed or strongly toothed. Leaves alternate on stems, and are always white and downy below, white turning shiny green above. Flowers (September) are hanging female-only catkins (2-8 cm long), and the resulting capsules split (around October), releasing white cottony hairs that en masse resemble a snow storm.

Why is it weedy?

Prolific suckering habit ensures stands remain dense. Tall, long-lived, becomes dominant species in canopy. Tolerates drought, poor soils, mod hot to cold, little shade. Intolerant of poor drainage.

How does it spread?

No viable seed is produced, but suckers are spread by soil movement, intentional planting, and dumped greenwaste.

What damage does it do?

Forms huge stands, preventing native species establishing. Drains damp spots, roots clog watercourses.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed forest and shrubland, short tussockland, bare land, river systems.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Cut and squirt large plants (all year round): make 1 cut every 100mm around the trunk and fill or saturate each cut with 2g metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg or 10ml glyphosate (undiluted).
2. Frill large plants (all year round): glyphosate (250ml/L).
3. Cut trunk and paint stump (all year round): cut trunk near to the ground, and swab freshly cut stump with glyphosate (250ml/L) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L).
4. Overall spray small plants (full leaf stage only): glyphosate (100ml/10L).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Exclude livestock, maintain pest control. Follow up on suckers 3-monthly until eliminated. Alternatively, treat large trees standing, spray small sprouts and plant densely to shade out suckering regrowth.



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Photo: Trevor James



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