

Ground Cover - Pest Plants

Introduction

There are a number of low growing, creeping plants which are a serious threat to native forest. They often spread rapidly, creating a dense mass of foliage, preventing the germination of native plants and compromising the regeneration of the forest. Most of them grow well in the dense shade of the forest floor. Some of these plants commonly found in the Bay of Plenty are listed below, with suitable control methods.

Pest Plant Status

All plants listed below excluding Periwinkle, are banned from sale, propagation and distribution within New Zealand.



Houttuynia

Houttuynia

Houttuynia (*Houttuynia cordata*) is a recently introduced perennial ground cover plant. Its natural habitats are moist loamy soils, shallow water and low light situations. It thrives along the margins of ponds and waterways.

Houttuynia's rampant growth can rapidly displace native plants in forest and wetland ecosystems.

Origin

Houttuynia is a native of eastern Asia. Although banned from importation, plants entered New Zealand in 1996 under the name of Chameleon plant. Commercial propagation was immediately banned, but not before Houttuynia was sold in many regions to home gardeners.

Description

Houttuynia is a creeping ornamental garden plant, which has heart shaped leaves up to 75 mm long and almost as wide.

The leaves are comprised of a mixture of colours from green through yellow to red, the brighter colours being more prominent when grown in full sunlight. The leaves are opposite along thin erect stems



Houttuynia

which arise from slender rhizomes.

The minute flowers are densely clustered on short spikes. At the base of each spike are four white petal-like parts.

Invasion

As Houttuynia is very easily propagated by division or cuttings, plant fragments can easily take root and form new infestations. These often establish from the indiscriminate dumping of garden refuse. Once established Houttuynia can cover large areas assisted by creeping stolons and an extensive root system. Houttuynia will also set viable seed.

Control

Manual

Remove as much of the rooted plant material as possible and repeat at regular intervals. Dispose of all material by incineration or take to an official transfer station or landfill site.

Herbicide

There is limited information available on herbicide control for *Houttuynia*. There are herbicides that may be suitable for control, however these may not be appropriate for use amongst desirable garden plants. Contact a pest plant officer at Environment Bay of Plenty for herbicide control advice.

Wandering Jew

Wandering Jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) has become common and widespread in the Bay of Plenty region.



Wandering jew

Wandering Jew thrives in shady, damp habitats, e.g. streambanks and native bush environments. In these situations it forms a dense ground cover that prevents the regeneration of native seedlings.

Origin

Wandering Jew is a native of South America. It was introduced to New Zealand as an ornamental ground cover plant. Wandering Jew was first recorded as naturalised in 1916.

Description

Wandering Jew is a fleshy stemmed, frost tender perennial creeper. The stems produce roots at the nodes wherever they contact the ground. It has shiny, dark green, succulent type leaves. Clusters of small, white flowers occur from August to November.

Invasion

Wandering Jew spreads vegetatively, as it does not normally set seed in New Zealand. Stem fragments are easily broken off and take root at the nodes. These fragments may be washed downstream to infest new sites.

Dumped garden refuse is another way that new sites of Wandering Jew can become established.

Control

Manual

Small areas can be physically removed by raking and hand pulling. Wandering Jew is very difficult to successfully compost. It is best to dispose of all plant material at an official transfer station or landfill.



Wandering Jew thrives in shady, damp habitats



Herbicide

Larger infestations may be controlled using herbicides. The addition of a wetting agent or penetrant is necessary to achieve good coverage and herbicide uptake.

- **Triclopyr** (e.g. Grazon®) 60 ml/10 litres water plus 20 mls penetrant (e.g. Pulse®); or Renovate® at 100 ml/10 litres water
- **Activated Amitrole** 200 ml/10 litres water plus 20 mls penetrant (e.g. Pulse®)

Two or more applications may be necessary for well-established, layered infestations.

Periwinkle

Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) has similar adverse properties to Wandering Jew. It thrives in



Periwinkle

shady, damp habitats, forming a dense ground cover preventing the regeneration of indigenous plants.

Origin

Periwinkle is a native of the Mediterranean. In New Zealand Periwinkle has naturalised in most districts.

Description

Periwinkle is a mat-forming herb with hairless stems up to 1 m in length that may root at the nodes.

The leaves are usually dark glossy green and about 40 mm long. They are oval in shape and opposite along the stems. Periwinkle produces solitary, tubular flowers that are mauvish-blue, originating from the leaf axils. The flowers are up to 50 mm in diameter.

Invasion

Spread may be via seed dispersal. More often Periwinkle establishes via dumped garden waste along roadsides, forest margins, waste places, river or drain banks and unmanaged places.

Control

Manual

Remove as much plant material as possible and repeat at regular intervals. Dispose of all material at an official transfer station or landfill site.

Herbicide

Periwinkle is difficult to control with herbicides. Good coverage and the use of a wetting agent are essential for effective results. More than one application will probably be necessary. Periwinkle is often established amongst desirable plant species. Seek the advice of an Environment Bay of Plenty pest plant officer before applying herbicide.

- **Activated Amitrole** 200 ml/10 litres water, plus 20 ml penetrant (e.g. Pulse®)
- **Glyphosate®** (e.g. Roundup®) 200 ml/10 litres water, plus 20 ml penetrant (e.g. Pulse®)

Plectranthus

Plectranthus (*Plectranthus ciliatus*) is a trailing ground cover plant that is a serious threat to the understorey of native forests by shading out seedlings and other low growing native species.

Origin

Plectranthus is native to eastern South Africa. It was introduced to New Zealand as an ornamental ground cover species and was popularly grown as a trailing pot plant. Plectranthus was first recorded as naturalised in 1965. It is now common throughout the North Island.

Description

Plectranthus is a groundcover plant with long trailing stems that are densely covered in purple hairs. The leaves grow 50 to 120 mm long and 30 to 70 mm wide. They are green above and glossy purple below. The leaves are also hairy, especially along the veins. The white flowers are speckled with small purple spots and are borne on erect spikes up to 300 mm long.

Invasion

Plectranthus produces seed but its main means of dispersal is vegetative. It produces long vigorous runners which spread rapidly to form thick, dense mats in shady to semi-shady situations. Another means of dispersal is by people dumping garden refuse along roadsides and in bush reserves.



Plectranthus

Control

Manual

Small patches may be raked or pulled by hand. Dispose of plant material at an official transfer station or landfill. Do not compost as stems may regrow.

Herbicide

- **Triclopyr** (e.g. Grazon®) 60 ml/10 litres water, plus 20 ml penetrant (e.g. Pulse®); or Renovate® 100 ml/10 litres water

Caution: When using any herbicide READ THE LABEL thoroughly. Follow all instructions and safety requirements.

Information in this fact sheet regarding herbicides does not necessarily appear on the labels of the products concerned. Environment Bay of Plenty does not accept liability for any damage that may arise from use of chemicals at non-standard rates. Mention of product trade names implies neither endorsement of those products nor criticism of similar products not mentioned.



For further information and advice, contact your local pest plant officer at Environment Bay of Plenty:

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This fact sheet was prepared by Environment Bay of Plenty's Pest Plant Section.

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