

# Bear's breeches

## *Acanthus mollis*

### Family

Acanthaceae (acanthus)

### Also known as

Oyster plant, bear's foot plant, sea holly

### Where is it originally from?

South West Europe

### What does it look like?

Leafy, erect perennial herb (<1.2 m), with thick roots and large, glossy, strongly lobed, dark green leaves (up to 50 x 30 cm) on long leaf stalks (10-50 cm) growing from the root crown, or on shorter stalks (2-5 cm) growing from the vertical flowering stem. Numerous partly tubular flowers (Oct-April) with one white petal and a large purple 'hood', with purple or brownish veins, are held at the top of the stem in a spike, with lower flowers maturing first. Many dark brown, flattened oval seeds (<1 cm long) are produced in individual capsules (3-4 cm long) from November to May.

### Why is it weedy?

Tolerate moderate shade, forms large clumps, and spreads rapidly in disturbed ground, covering large areas.

### How does it spread?

Seed is spread by water and birds, and it also spreads by root fragments.

### What damage does it do?

Shades out small native plants in shady environments.

### Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Riverbanks and roadsides in partial shade and pasture.

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

Dig out scattered plants (all year round): Ensure removal of all roots and dispose of roots and seedheads at a refuse transfer station. Leaves can be mulched.

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

Monitor the site and treat any regrowth from root or seed.



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



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis