

Japanese spindle tree

Euonymus japonicus

Family

Celastraceae

Also known as

Japanese spindle tree

Where is it originally from?

Japan, China and Korea

What does it look like?

Hairless, evergreen shrub or small tree (<7 m tall) with much branched stems. Round or slightly 4-ribbed twigs are usually smooth but wrinkle when dry. Glossy, ovalish, finely toothed leaves (25-70 mm long) are in opposite pairs along stems. Usually grown as a variegated yellow-leaved cultivar, but all seedlings revert to the green form. Greenish flowers are insignificant and in clusters of 5-many. Fleshy, round, pink seed capsules (6-10 mm diameter) are 4-celled with orange to red flesh surrounding seeds.

Are there any similar species?

Euonymus europaeus is similar. Many native species are similar, but none have fine-toothed leaf margins or pink seed capsules.

Why is it weedy?

Produces many, well dispersed seeds. Tolerates shade, wind, salt, poor soils, hot to cool temperatures, and high to moderate rainfall.

How does it spread?

Birds and possibly possums, and occasionally by soil and water movement. Common seed sources are gardens, parks, and roadsides. It is a garden escape species that is commonly cultivated, but because wild plants revert to a green-leaved form, they are often not recognised as seedlings of the yellow-leaved parents.

What damage does it do?

Forms dense stands in open or shade, preventing the establishment of native plant seedlings.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed bush and shrubland, coastal shrub and bare land, inshore islands, pohutukawa forest, forest margins, and cliffs.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Physical removal - Hand pull small plants, or dig out entire plant including roots (all year round).
2. Cut and paste (all year round) - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) or metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) or picloram gel (43g/l strength) to the entire cut stem.

When a gel is inadequate apply a solution of diesel and product containing triclopyr + picloram (20:1 diesel:triclopyr/picloram). Apply the mixture over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides.

3. Foliar spray

Apply Glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide (20ml/L) plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L) to cover entire plant Note: Non selective. Avoid overspray onto desirable plants.

OR Apply Metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient) (Knapsack 0.5g/L, or Gun and hose 20-35g/L) plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts

OR Apply Triclopyr herbicide (600g/L active ingredient) at 6ml/L plus penetrant 1ml/L to thoroughly wet all parts of plant.



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Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Note: Triclopyr herbicide is 'grass friendly' but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Reseeds in bared sites and cut stumps resprout, so ongoing followup is required to ensure eradication.