

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 and North Africa

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



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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