Elephant ear

Alocasia brisbanensis

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Araceae (arum)

Also known as
Alocasia macrorrhiza, *Alocasia indica*

Where is it originally from?
Ceylon, Tahiti

What does it look like?
Large perennial (<3 m tall) with a thick, fleshy rhizome with milky sap. Mature plants have thick, trunk-like stems (5 m x 30 cm) with leaf scars and the lower part of the stem usually lies along the ground. Shiny, leathery, deep green arrow-shaped leaves (80 x 50 cm) have prominent veins, and occasionally have white patches. Fragrant creamy-yellow to orange flower spikes (<15 cm long) are held inside green boat-shaped bracts (<5 cm long) and develop into scarlet or orange berries.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Are there any similar species?
Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) has smaller leaves on long stalks with a reddish-purplish tinge.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Why is it weedy?
Long-lived, smothers ground in damp sites on most soil types, and persists under regenerating canopy in dense patches. Drought-resistant once established, and recovers from heavy damage. Stock avoid it as it is poisonous, so it dominates grazed sites.

How does it spread?
Limited distribution through seed drop near to parent plants, and occasionally through water. Clumps expand slowly through new shoots. It can be spread by intentional planting, dumped vegetation, and soil movement.

What damage does it do?
Smothers the ground, preventing the seedlings of native species from establishing. It is unlikely to poison native fauna.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Wetlands, streamsides, river systems, heavily disturbed shrubland and forest, damp frost-free open areas, and regenerating ex-pasture.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Hand pull or dig out entire plant (all year round) - Slash tops, Leave on site to rot down. Ensure all root material is dug out and removed from site to prevent regrowth. Mulch and dispose of to a refuse transfer station.
2. Cut and paste - Cut/slash the stem as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply a glyphosate + metsulfuron gel mix to the entire cut stump.
3. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack. Apply a mix of Glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) at 15ml/L + metsulfuron (600g/kg active ingredient) at 0.3g/L + an organo silicone penetrant such as 'pulse' or 'boost' at 1ml/L and thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts. Do not use over or near water bodies or wetlands and use only as directed on lab
Tip Begin clearance at top of catchment.
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?
Digging usually leaves rhizome fragments and plants will always regrow after slashing. Exclude all livestock from site

when treating. Follow up annually.