Balloon vine

Cardiospermum grandiflorum

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Sapindaceae (soapberry)

Also known as
Cardiospermum halicacabum, heart seed vine

Where is it originally from?
North and Central America, West Indies and Africa

What does it look like?
Perennial climber with yellow hairs on a ribbed stem, and compound leaves of 9 thin, coarsely toothed, light green, hairy leaflets (2.5-10 cm long) arranged in groups of 3. Clusters of white to pale yellow flowers with 4 petals (7-9mm long) are produced from summer to winter, with tendrils growing from the base of the flower stalk. Balloon-like fruit has 3 thin, papery walls (4-8cm long), ripens from green to straw-coloured in autumn and contains 3 black seeds (7mm wide).

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
Small balloon vine (*Cardiospermum halicacabum*) is very similar, but smaller and not hairy. Clematis and old man's beard (*Clematis* species) have leaves composed of 3 leaflets, and white flowers with four petals, but seeds have a fluffy 'parachute' of hairs attached rather than a capsule.

Photo: Trevor James

Why is it weedy?
Grows vigorously, climbing up to 10 m high or spreading along the ground, blanketing all vegetation.

How does it spread?
Seed capsules are spread by wind and water, and spreads also by suckering and root fragments.

What damage does it do?
Grows rapidly into the tops of trees, excluding light and forming a thick curtain of stems, the weight of the vines can contribute to canopy collapse and ecosystem destruction.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Moist areas along river edges, forest margins and road edges in warmer areas. Tolerates flooding and part shade, but prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Seedlings germinate on disturbed land.

What can I do to get rid of it?
Report any suspected sightings of Balloon vine to your nearest regional council.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Remove the seed source, the original parent plant. Monitor the site and pull out or spray seedlings and regrowth. Seed viability is relatively short (approximately 18 months).