Climbing spindle berry

Celastrus orbiculatus

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Celastraceae (spindle tree)

Also known as
Oriental bittersweet, *Celastrus scandens*

Where is it originally from?
Eastern Asia, Korea, China and Japan

Photo: Trevor James

What does it look like?
Deciduous, hairless climber (<12 m high) with suckering roots, round, woody, layering, greyish brown stems and young green twigs that often have sharp spines (1-2 mm). Roundish, finely serrated leaves (5-10cm long) alternate on the stem and turn yellow before falling. Pale green insignificant flowers are followed by round yellow to orange seed capsules (6-8 mm diameter) that expose fleshy scarlet seed coverings.

Why is it weedy?
Grows rapidly, has a scrambling habit, suckering roots, and stems that take root when they touch the ground. Well dispersed seeds are viable for 2-5 years. Tolerates hot to very cold temperatures, shade (where seeds germinate best), and high to moderately low rainfall.

How does it spread?
Seeds are spread by birds, possibly possums and other mammals.

Photo: Trevor James

What damage does it do?
Stems strangle host and climb to the top of most canopies, causing them to collapse. Stems in contact with the ground take root, forming dense, forming impenetrable thickets.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Disturbed and intact bush, shrubland, and bush margins.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

What can I do to get rid of it?
Note: Check with your local regional council first. This is classed as a pest plant in some regions and the council may be responsible for its control.
1. Physical removal - Hand pull or dig out entire plant - Ensure all root material is removed to prevent regrowth. Ensure cut stems are not left touching soil as they may take root and regrow.
2. Cut and paste - Cut the stem as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (400g/l strength) or picloram gel (43g/L strength). Do not use picloram gel near desirable plants or over wetlands. When a gel is inadequate a solution of diesel and triclopyr (20:1 diesel:triclopyr) or commercial formulations (120g triclopyr/l of oil, or triclopyr /picloram mixes (TP)) can be used. Here it is important that the herbicide solution is painted over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides.
3. Basal spray stems up to 20cm diametre with X-Tree Basal. Ensure the base is thoroughly covered at ground level.
4. Foliar spray (spring - late summer) - Apply Glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at 20ml/L to cover entire plant OR apply metsulfuron herbicide at 0.5g/L using a hand held sprayer/knapsack + organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) OR apply triclopyr herbicide (600g/L active ingredient) at 6ml/L plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L).
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?
Hard to kill as stumps and suckers resprout and dropped stems take root. Maintain at least 6 monthly follow up until

eliminated.