Fragrant Virgin's Bower

Clematis flammula

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Ranunculaceae (buttercup)

Where is it originally from?
Southern Europe and northern Africa

What does it look like?
Deciduous, climbing, vine (<6+ m tall) with long, woody, round and weakly ribbed stems. Leaves are in opposite pairs on the stem, each comprising two rows of thick, sparsely hairly, unlobed small leaflets that fall in Autumn. White flowers (2-3 cm diameter) in large bunches (Jan-Mar) are followed by dense, fluffy clusters of hairy seeds (5-6 mm long) with distinctive white-plumes (3-4 cm long) in May.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
Native Clematis species, especially *C. paniculata*. Also old man's beard (*C. vitalba*) and *C. tangutica*. All non-native species found in the wild are deciduous and flower Dec-May, except the semi-weedy, pink-flowered *C. montana* which flowers Oct-Dec.

Why is it weedy?
Rapidly grows into the canopy where it forms dense, heavy masses. Tolerates damp, drought, wind, salt, many soil types, moderate shade, and damage. Stems take root where they touch the ground, and it produces seed that is easily spread.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Seed is spread by wind or water. Stem fragments are spread by garden waste dumping.

What damage does it do?
Smothers and kills all plants to medium canopy height and prevents native species establishing. Moves readily into shrubland and forest margins as stems take root where they touch the ground.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Shrublands, possibly disturbed and open forest and forest margins, cliffs, and inshore islands.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Cut and paste - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and again above ground (to prevent aerial roots attaching from hanging stems) and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) or picloram gel (43g/l strength), or a product containing triclopyr + picloram 50ml/L water mixture over the entire cut stump. Dispose of cutaway segments to refuse transfer station or burn.
2. Basal spray stems - Basal spray stems up to 20cm diametre with X-Tree Basal. Apply from the ground to a height of 6 times the diameter of the plant, ensure the base is thoroughly covered at ground level.
3. Foliar spray - Apply triclopyr (600g/L active ingredient) herbicide at a rate of 6ml/L OR clopyralid herbicide (300g/l active ingredient) at a rate of 12.5ml/L. Clopyralid is a herbicide for selective control on plants in the daisy family and some broadleaf weeds. Do not use over or near water bodies or wetlands and use only as directed on label.
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?
Stumps resprout very quickly, and cut stems root at nodes. Do not leave cut stems to mulch. Dispose of by burning or deep burial. Replant bared areas promptly to minimise seedling regrowth. Check for seedlings at least 6 monthly.