Himalayan honeysuckle

Leycesteria formosa

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Caprifoliaceae (honeysuckle)

Where is it originally from?
Himalayas

What does it look like?
Deciduous or semi-evergreen, many-stemmed perennial shrub (<2+ m) with straight, hairless round stems (1-2 cm thick) that are hollow and green when young but become woody. Heart-shaped (occasionally 5-9 lobed) leaves (4-14 x 2-8 cm) are in opposite pairs on the stem. Terminal, drooping spikes (3-8 cm long) of white funnel-shaped flowers (15 mm long) with delicate deep reddish-purple bracts (Dec-May) are followed by juicy, dark brownish-purple berries (7-10 mm diameter).

Photo: Trevor James

Why is it weedy?
Few seeds produced are well dispersed by birds and water, and new plants quickly form dense thickets. Colonises light wells, slips and other gaps, quickly replacing native species that are trying to establish and causing invasion by other exotic species, especially vines by getting rid of native competition. Tolerates moderate to deep shade, frost, damage, damp, and most soils. Not long-lived, so eventually succeeded by other species.

How does it spread?
Birds and water disperse seeds. Common seed sources include plantation forest, roadsides, disturbed bush, and under hedges.

What damage does it do?
Colonises light wells, slips and other gaps, quickly replacing native pioneer species. Causes invasion by other exotic species, especially vines.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Wet forest, shrublands and margins, streamsides, damp gullies, and possibly areas that would usually be dominated by epiphytes.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Pull or dig seedlings (all year round). Leave on site to rot down.
2. Cut and paste - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) or metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) to the entire cut stem.
3. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall, or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the adjuvant recommended on the label.
Apply glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at 20ml/L plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L) to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) plants.
OR apply metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 0.5g/L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) + organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L). Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts.
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.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Stumps resprout so frequent followup required to ensure eradication. Remove pigs and other stock to minimise erosion

and the development of light wells. Replant sites where native species are slow to recover to prevent reseeding.