Chinese privet

Ligustrum sinense

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Family
Oleaceae (olive)

Where is it originally from?
Temperate and tropical regions, China

What does it look like?
Shrub or small tree (<5m tall), evergreen or semi-deciduous in cold districts with distinctive warty lumps on stems and densely hairy shoots. Oval, dull green leaves (25-60 x 12-25 mm) occasionally have wavy edges. Loose drooping clusters (<10 cm long) of small, tubular and very fragrant white flowers with tiny mauve anthers (Jul-Mar) are followed by round, green berries that mature to dull purplish-black.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
Ligustrum ovalifolium and putaputaweta.

Why is it weedy?
Produces many high-viability seeds in widely dispersed berries, and forms dense stands. Tolerates dense shade (although flowers in moderate light), frost, damage, grazing, most soil types, high to moderately low temperatures, damp and drought conditions, salt and wind. Short-lived but continuously replaced.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Seed is spread by many bird species, as well as vegetation dumping and soil movement. Common seed sources are domestic and farm hedges, roadsides, wastelands, quarries, gullies, and exotic plantations.

What damage does it do?
Dense stands prevent the establishment of native plant seedlings and displace vulnerable native shrub species. Poisonous berries may possibly impact on native fauna, especially insects.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Forest margins, heavily disturbed bush, shrublands, open stream and alluvial river systems, fernland, rocklands, cliffs, coastal and estuarine areas, and inshore islands.

Photo: Trevor James

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) or a gel/mixture of glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) + metsulfuron (10g/l strength)to the entire cut stem. When a gel is inadequate apply a solution of diesel and triclopyr (20:1 diesel:triclopyr) or commercial formulations (120g triclopyr/l of oil, or product containing triclopyr and picloram 50ml/L water mix) can be used. Apply the mixture over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides.
3. Basal spray - 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.
4. Drill or frill - Drill downward sloping holes around the circumference of the trunk about 8-10 cm apart, or Frill (make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant). Fill the holes or saturate the cuts with metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (20-50g/L + penetrant) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) .
5. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the label recommended adjuvant.
Apply metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 5g/10L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) plus 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.
OR picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/l and triclopyr 300g/l active ingredient at 6ml/L) plus organosilicone penetrant (1ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Triclopyr and picloram herbicides are ‘grass friendly’ but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach and kill other plants. Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.
NOTE: These herbicides are not for use over or near water bodies or wetlands
6. Biocontrol - For information about the privet lace bug please visit:
https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/managing-invasive-species/weed-biocontrol/projects-agents/biocontrol-agents/privet-lacebug
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?
Untreated stumps resprout quickly. Bared areas reseed profusely. Follow up 6-monthly, easiest to spot during spring flowering. Replant bared areas to minimise seedling growth.