Climbing dock

Rumex sagittatus

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Polygonaceae (dock)

Where is it originally from?
South Africa

What does it look like?
Scrambling or low-climbing perennial with brown kumara or beetroot-like tubers (5-20 cm long) with yellow flesh as well as extensive long weak rhizomes. Hairless, reddish-green stems (<3-4 m long) are ribbed, zigzagging and slender. Light green arrow-shaped leaves (3-8 x 2-6 cm) have pointed basal lobes facing downwards. Clusters of small, green-pink or reddish flowers are produced at the top of the plant (Nov-Mar), followed by large masses of showy yellow-pink-crimson, flat, heart-shaped capsules (1 cm diameter) containing seeds.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
No other climber has tubers and conspicuous pink seed capsule.

Why is it weedy?
Effective dispersal mechanisms and a fast growth rate allows it to scramble quickly over most plants to 3+ m high. Tolerates damp or drought conditions (dies back to tubers), hot to cool temperatures and most soils, but intolerant of shade.

How does it spread?
Seed and tubers are spread by wind and fresh or salt water, soil movement and vegetation dumping. Common sources are wasteland, hedges, coastal land, heavily disturbed sites and roadsides.

What damage does it do?
Invades regenerating habitats, bare and open sites, replaces low canopy, and prevents the establishment of native plant seedlings. Provides support for more aggressive vines, grasses, etc.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Bush and shrubland margins, tussockland, fernland, bare land and dune areas.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Hand pull or dig out entire plant - Ensure all root material is removed to prevent regrowth. Burn or dispose of tubers to refuse.
2. Foliar spray - spring to summer
Apply glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at a rate of 20ml/L to cover entire plant.
OR Apply metsulfuron herbicide at a rate of 0.5g/L using a hand held sprayer/knapsack plus an organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) .
Note: Overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Metsulfuron based herbicides have residual activity in the soil which may leach through soil and kill other plants, do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Do not use these herbicides 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?
Tubers usually (rhizomes occasionally) resprout after herbicide treatment. Missed fragments resprout after digging. Plant bared sites to minimise seedling invasion.

Photo: Trevor James