Tree mallow

Malva arborea

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Malvaceae (mallow)

Also known as
Lavatera arborea, *Malva dendromorpha*, bush mallow, Cornish tree mallow, lavatera, velvet tree mallow.

Where is it originally from?
North-western Africa (i.e. northern Algeria and Tunisia), the Azores, the Madeira Islands, the Canary Islands, and western and southern Europe.

What does it look like?
Erect stout biennial herb, usually with a single stem (<1-3 m) that is hairy when young, becoming hairless and woody at the base when the plant gets older. Large leaves (<20cm wide) have 5-7 lobes and are velvety to the touch. Deep pink flowers with purple veins (4cm, Aug-May) are arranged in clusters at the end and along the upper parts of the stem and are followed by fruit containing 6-8 seeds each.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
There are several other large *Malva* species that have naturalised in New Zealand.

Why is it weedy?
Invades disturbed areas and crowds out native species.

How does it spread?
Seed is spread by soil movement, wind, and birds and are viable in the group for 5+ years.

Photo: Trevor James

What damage does it do?
Forms tall dense clumps capable of outcompeting native perennial species. Stands have no understorey and die back in summer, exposing soil in coastal areas to erosion by strong sea breezes, increasing vulnerability to invasion by annual weeds, and potentially making habitat less suitable to nesting bird colonies.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Terrestrial waste places, cultivated land, and coastal sites. Widely naturalised in the North, South and Chatham Islands of New Zealand, preferring coastal areas but also occupying roadsides, waste places and cultivated land. Prefers high light, thrives in disturbed sites and can tolerate salt.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Dig or pull out small infestations
5. Foliar spray - Apply Picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/l and triclopyr 300g/l active ingredient) at a rate of 6ml/L plus organosilicone penetrant (1ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant.
Note: Tricolopyr and picloram herbicides are 'grass friendly' but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach through soil and kill other plants. Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.
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: Trevor James

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Ensure new plants are controlled prior to seeding