Pride of Tenerife

Echium pininana

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Boraginaceae (borage)

Also known as
Giant bugloss, tree echium, pine echium, giant viper's bugloss, giant bugloss, tower of jewels, pride of Tenerife, tajinaste, taginaste,

Where is it originally from?
Canary Islands

What does it look like?
Shrubby herbaceous biennial or triennial (<2-4 m) growing from a deep taproot. Narrowly lance-shaped, deeply veined rosette leaves (25-50 cm), are covered in fine, rough hairs. Stem leaves are similar to rosette leaves but are narrower and shorter (10-25 cm long). Main, unbranched, cylindrical flowering stem resembles a woody trunk (1-3 m tall). Biennial or triennial, it typically remains as a tall rosette the first year, flowers the second or third year, and then dies after shedding its seed. Distinctive for its very tall flower spikes (2-3m) carrying a dense mass of leaves and small flowers that are pink in bud, and pale blue to mauve once fully opened. Each flower produces 4 prickly, brown, 1-seeded nutlets.

Photo: Trevor James

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Why is it weedy?
Self-seeds easily to form clusters of plants. Seed set has been reported in excess of 200000 per plant, and seeds remain viable in the soil for many years.

How does it spread?
Seed is spread short distances by wind. Is also deliberately planted.

What damage does it do?
Forms dense stands, crowding out native species. In addition to the live foliage, the dead leaves blanket the ground and keep sunlight from reaching any of the native plants that otherwise might sprout and grow there.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Prefers sunny habitats with moderately moist conditions. Thrives on steep and disturbed hillsides in coastal habitats. Limited by harsh winters and full shade.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal (all year round) - Hand pull seedlings or dig out entire plant. Dispose of mature seed heads.
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 glyphosate gel (120g/L strength)
3. Foliar spray - Apply glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient at 100ml/10L knapsack, 1L/100L gun and hose) plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L), to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) 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