

# African olive

*Olea europaea* subsp. *cuspidata*

## Family

Oleaceae (olive)

## Also known as

*Olea europaea* subspecies *africana*

## Where is it originally from?

Europe

## What does it look like?

Dense bushy shrub or small tree (<7 m tall) with angular, scaly young stems and bark that becomes rough as it matures. Lance-shaped leaves (5-11 x 1-2 cm) are in opposite pairs on the stem, dark green and occasionally scaly above, and scaly and pale green or silvery underneath. Whitish, strongly smelling flowers (3-4 mm long) appear from July to March, followed by an ovalish glossy fruit (5-8 mm diameter) that ripens from green to red to black.

## Are there any similar species?

The commonly cultivated European olive (*Olea europaea* subspecies *europaea*) which has white leaf undersides and black fruit (1-2 cm long) can also become weedy.

## Why is it weedy?

Long-lived, forms dense canopy, and produces many long-lived, well dispersed seeds. Tolerates drought, hot to moderate temperatures, wind, salt, damage, and moderate shade.

## How does it spread?

Birds, possibly possums and livestock eat the fruit and spread the seeds. Common sources are gardens, hedges and waste places.

## What damage does it do?

Forms dense (occasionally pure), long-lived stands in open and understorey, and fills canopy in light gaps. Prevents establishment of native plant seedlings.

## Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Dry disturbed forest and shrubland, bare land, especially in coastal areas, and inshore islands.

## What can I do to get rid of it?

Remove systematically to minimise reintroduction by birds.

1. Pull or dig small plants (all year round). Leave on site to rot down.
2. Cut and squirt (all year round): Make 1 cut every 100 mm around the trunk and apply metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (1g) to each cut.
3. Cut down and paint stump (all year round): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L).
4. Spray (all year round): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L).

**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?

Cut stumps resprout. Reseeds in bared areas. Garden and hedge sources should be removed. Avoid soil disturbance, replant bared sites where possible.



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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