

Boxthorn

Lycium ferocissimum

Family

Solanaceae (nightshade)

Also known as

African boxthorn

Where is it originally from?

South Africa

What does it look like?

Densely branched, erect, evergreen shrub (<6 m tall) with tough, woody stems alternately branched at square angles, forming a box-like pattern, and with rigid spines (13 mm). Hairless, fleshy, bright green leaves (40 x 12 mm) are narrow, oblong and clustered along the stems. White to pale mauve flowers (10-13 mm) produced from July to March are followed by tear shaped orange red berries (5-12 mm) in autumn.

Are there any similar species?

Hawthorn and barberry are similar. *Lycium barbarum* (*L. chinense*) is similar but is deciduous.

Why is it weedy?

Forms dense, tall, long-lived stands, excluding most other vegetation. Tolerates a wide variety of soil types (sand to rocky cliffs), drought, salt, wind, and hot to cold temperatures. Poisonous (usually not grazed).

How does it spread?

Birds and possibly possums. Common seed sources are farm hedges, roadsides, waste places.

What damage does it do?

Overtops native plants and can become only woody plant species on site. Petrels and other seabirds can become entangled and die. Berries may poison birds.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Sand dunes, shrublands, cliffs, islands and other coastal areas, gravel, and roadsides.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Hand pull seedlings, winch out larger plants (all year round): Plant material can be left on site.
2. Stump swab (all year round): glyphosate (200ml/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (200ml/L).
3. Frilling: Make deep regular cuts into the sapwood around the tree base, taking care not to ring-bark it. Apply glyphosate (250ml/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) to each cut.
4. Injection method: Drill holes sloping into the sapwood at regular intervals around trunk. Inject glyphosate (250ml/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) into holes. If necessary wait until the liquid subsides then apply the remainder.
5. Spray (all year round): glyphosate (10ml/L + penetrant). Preferably treat coastal sites after rain to lessen effect of salt on herbicide. Total coverage needed.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Untreated stumps regrow after slashing. Not controlled by fire. Prefers open sites, so revegetate any bare ground left after clearance.



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Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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