Cherry laurel

Prunus laurocerasus

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Family
Rosaceae (rose)

Where is it originally from?
South East Europe

What does it look like?
Evergreen, spreading shrub or tree (<10 m) often with multiple short trunks. Thick, leathery, narrowly oval to lance-shaped leaves (75-180 mm x 23-55 mm), with slightly serrated and curved-under margins and pointed tips, have shiny upper surfaces with pale veins, paler and less shiny undersides, and short stalks (1 cm long). Spikes (8-12 cm long) of small fragrant blossoms (20-30 per spike) with five round, spreading, greenish white to cream petals (Aug-Sept) are followed by grape-like clusters of fruit resembling dark purple to black cherries (Nov-Jan).

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Are there any similar species?
Prunus laurocerasus can be distinguished from other cherries and cherry laurels (e.g. *P. lusitanica*) by being evergreen, having flowers on long spikes rather than small clusters, and its leaves having few, short and distantly spaced teeth only towards the tip.

Photo: Trevor James

Why is it weedy?
Large species which creates dense, long-lived thickets. It seeds freely and is poisonous.

How does it spread?
Seed is bird-dispersed. Vegetative spread is by suckering from the root system.

What damage does it do?
Forms dense stands in open and disturbed habitats preventing the regeneration of native species.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Riverine forest, disturbed forest and shrubland, alluvial terraces, plantations, shelterbelts, roadsides, wastelands.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Hand pull small plants, or excavate larger trees. Burn or leave to rot down on site.
2. Cut and paste (all year round) - 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 metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength). When a gel is inadequate apply a solution of diesel and product containing triclopyr + picloram (20:1 diesel:triclopyr/picloram). Apply the mixture over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides.
3. Basal spray - spray stems up to 20cm diametre with X-Tree Basal. Apply from the ground to a height of 6 times the diameter of the plant, ensure the base is thoroughly covered at ground level.
4. Drill or frill - Drill downward sloping holes around the circumference of the trunk about 8-10 cm apart, or Frill (make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant). Fill the holes or saturate the cuts with metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (20-50g/L + penetrant) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) .
5. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the label recommended adjuvant.Apply metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 5g/10L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts OR apply picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/l and triclopyr 300g/l active ingredient at 6ml/L) plus organosilicone penetrant (1ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Triclopyr and picloram herbicides are ‘grass friendly’ but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach and kill

other plants. Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.
NOTE: These herbicides are not for use over or near water bodies or wetlands
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?
Monitor the site for any regrowth and seedlings for two years. If possible, search for and eliminate the source of the infestation. Where appropriate, plant local native trees or shrubs to produce shade.