Elaeagnus

Elaeagnus xreflexa

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Family
Elaeagnaceae (elaeagnus)

Also known as
Elaeagnus hybrid, *Elaeagnus pungens*, *E. glabra*, *E.* 'variegata'

Where is it originally from?
Thought to be from Japan

What does it look like?
Vigorous, dense, evergreen shrub, scrambling over support (<20 m tall), with a very tough, suckering rootstock. Stems are long, arching, tough, with young shoots being brown and scaly and older stems often with spines. Leaves (45-90 x 15-40 mm) are arranged alternately on the stems, are hairless above, and silvery or browny-scaly (often densely) underneath. Small drooping clusters of tiny, whitish, fragrant flowers (Mar-May) are followed by a pale reddish-orange fruit (18 x 10 mm) containing one ribbed seed.

Photo: Trevor James

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Why is it weedy?
Scrambling habit, suckering roots, layering stems, nitrogen fixing ability, extremely long-lived and not grazed. Tolerant of drought, wet, high to medium-low temperature, wind, salt, most soil types, and moderate shade.

How does it spread?
Birds, and possibly possums and goats, spread the very rare seed which most plants never produce. Layering stems and suckers are spread in dumped vegetation. Common sources are old homestead and farm sites, roadsides, hedges, and tips.

What damage does it do?
Slowly smothers all other plants to canopy height, invades well-lit or partially shaded sites, and can increase soil nutrient status, affecting which native plant species can grow there.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Forest margins, consolidated sand dunes, shrubland, cliffs, and fernland.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Dig out with machinery wherever possible. Dry and burn roots and stems or bury deeply.
2. Stump swab (ground level): glyphosate (250ml/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) or picloram gel. Follow up likewise on suckers. Dispose of cut stems at a refuse transfer station, burn or bury deeply to prevent resprouting.
3. Injection (best in autumn): drill holes sloping into the sapwood at regular intervals around the tree. As each hole is drilled place glyphosate (250ml/L) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (20g/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) into the hole.
4. Frilling: use a sharp chisel or axe and make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant. Immediately apply glyphosate (250ml/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted) to the cuts using a paintbrush or a squeeze bottle.
5. Spray: glyphosate (300ml/15L (knapsack) or 2L/100L (spraygun)) or metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (5g/10L on small plants and regrowth). Treatment may need to be repeated.

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?
Stumps resprout, roots sucker and cut stems can layer. Extremely hard to kill, repeat treatments needed.

Photo: Trevor James