

Elder

Sambucus nigra

Family

Caprifoliaceae (honeysuckle)

Also known as

Elderberry

Where is it originally from?

Europe, West Asia, North Africa

What does it look like?

Deciduous shrub or small tree (<6 m tall). Stems are grey-fawn with white pith and many small and corky lumps (glands). Leaves comprise of 5-7 leaflets that are purple when very young, becoming green. Leaflet at the tip is broadly oval (4.5-11 cm long, 3.5-6 cm wide), hairless or hairy on veins beneath and on midrib above, serrated except towards base, and has a pointed tip. Other leaflets are smaller and narrower. Flowers and fruit form in a flat umbrella-shaped cluster (10-20 cm diameter). Dull white, pungent flowers (2-3 mm long, Nov-Jan) are on stalks that usually turn red-purple when fruit develop. Berry-like, round fruits (4-9 mm diameter) mature to shining black, occasionally remaining green.

Are there any similar species?

Sambucus pubens has pyramid shaped flower and fruit clusters and brown stem pith.

Why is it weedy?

Produces many well-dispersed seeds. Leaves are toxic so it is not grazed. It tolerates sun, shade and dry soils.

How does it spread?

Seed is dispersed by birds.

What damage does it do?

It invades disturbed habitats, forming moderately dense stands that inhibit regeneration of native species.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Scrub, shrubland, fernland, disturbed forest, forest margins, modified plant communities, roadsides in coastal and lowland habitats on medium to high fertility soils.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out seedlings and small plants. Mulch, all year round.
2. Cut stems near ground level and swab stumps with metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L), all year round.
3. Cut notches on downward angles every 10 cm around the trunk and inject each with 2 ml of metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (20 g/L), all year round.
4. Overall spray (in full leaf): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant (knapsack) or 20g/100L + penetrant (spraygun)).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Monitor the site and treat any regrowth and seedlings. Plant local native trees or shrubs to produce dense shade.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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