

# Monkey apple

## *Syzygium smithii*

### Family

Myrtaceae (myrtle)

### Also known as

Lilly pilly, white monkey apple, acmena, *Acmena smithii*, *Eugenia smithii*

### Where is it originally from?

Australia

### What does it look like?

Tree (<6-15 m tall) with smooth bark and oval, leathery leaves (4-12 x 2-5 cm) which are in opposite pairs along the stems. The leaves are glossy on top and dotted underneath, and are very aromatic when crushed and often become scaly. Whitish flowers (Oct-Jan) are followed by bunches of pink-mauve or white berry-like fruit with large seeds.

### Are there any similar species?

*Syzygium australe* looks almost identical.

### Why is it weedy?

Long-lived (100 yrs +) and produces a lot of seed that is well dispersed. Birds (especially pigeons) spread the seed, and seedlings are shade-tolerant and form dense stands that crowd out other species. It grows much faster than native species, any gaps in the bush canopy that are created by older native trees dying are rapidly filled by any monkey apple seedlings that may be present. Prefers moderate to highly fertile, well-drained soil, but tolerates frost, salt, drought and wind. Grows faster than native hardwoods.

### How does it spread?

Kereru eat the fruit and spread the seed, and it is also occasionally spread by soil movement. Hedges, shelterbelts, gardens, and roadsides are common seed sources.

### What damage does it do?

Forms dense carpet of seedlings under canopy, which grow after a gap in the canopy is created by windfall or possum damage etc to become a permanent canopy species. Can form almost pure stands.

### Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed (occasionally intact) forests, shrublands and fernland, usually under pigeon roosts.

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

Hard to kill.

1. Pull or dig seedlings (all year round). Leave on site to rot down.
2. Cut and squirt (all year round) or bore and fill: Make 1 cut or hole every 10 cm around the trunk, apply a slurry of metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (2g) to each cut or hole.
3. Cut down and paint stump (all year round): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/L).
4. Frill (continuous cut): treat with metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (4g/L + penetrant)
5. Spray (spring-autumn): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant).

### What can I do to stop it coming back?

Bared areas reseed profusely. Stumps coppice. Maintain rolling front, follow up at least 6-monthly to control seedlings. Replant densely, using pigeon-friendly species where possible, to minimise seedling growth.



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



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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