

# Spindle tree

*Euonymus europaeus*

## Family

Celastraceae (spindle tree)

## Also known as

European spindle tree, common spindle

## Where is it originally from?

Europe

## What does it look like?

Much-branched, deciduous shrub or small tree (<6m tall) with smooth, grey bark and young branches that are square, green and smooth. Paired oval leaves (2-10 cm) with pointed tips, margins with shallow rounded teeth, and 6-12mm leaf stalks usually turn red in autumn. Flower buds are greenish and usually 4-angled. Clusters of 2-15 flowers (8-10 mm diameter, Nov-Dec) with four narrow and widely separated greenish-yellow petals are followed by 4-lobed, deep pink seed capsules (Mar-May) that ripen to expose bright orange flesh covering each seed.

## Are there any similar species?

Japanese spindle tree (*E. japonicus*) is similar but evergreen, with thicker leaves. It has round instead of 4-lobed seed capsules, and bark on young branches becomes wrinkled.

## Why is it weedy?

Tolerates a wide range of conditions including shade, warm and cold temperatures, wind, poor soils and moderate to low rainfall. It is poisonous so is not grazed by stock.

## How does it spread?

Produces many seeds which germinate freely and are spread widely by birds, and sprouts (suckers) from its root system.

## What damage does it do?

Forms dense thickets in the open and in the shade, blocking light and space for native understorey plants and seedlings.

## Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Forest, forest margins, shrubland, scrubland, cliffs, dry sites, hedges, urban areas.

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

1. Hand pull small plants and seedlings (all year round). Mulch.
2. Cut and paint stump (all year round): cut stems near ground level and paint stumps with metsulfuron methyl 600g/kg (5g/L) or a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (100ml/L) or triclopyr 600EC (100ml/L) or glyphosate (200ml/L).
3. Overall spray (all year round): triclopyr 600EC (60ml/10L + penetrant) or metsulfuron methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L + penetrant).

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

Monitor the site for a least a year and treat any regrowth or seedlings (seeds survive more than 1 year in soil). Where appropriate plant a local native shrub or tree.



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



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis