

White-edged nightshade

Solanum marginatum

Family

Solanaceae (nightshade)

Where is it originally from?

North Africa

What does it look like?

Much-branched, perennial shrub or small tree (<5 m tall) with a shallow taproot. White stems are covered with yellow prickles, and young branches have a hairy, white-felted appearance. Thick, broadly ovate leaves are indented, with green upper surfaces with white edges and prominent veins, undersides always white-felted, and prickles on both sides. White to pale mauve flowers with a yellow centre (Nov-Mar) are followed by poisonous, round, tomato-like fruit (<4cm) maturing from mottled green to yellow when ripe, and containing many brown seeds.

Are there any similar species?

Devil's fig (*Solanum torvum*) leaf margins lack the white edge and are less lobed. Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*) is more common, shorter and more shrubby, spines are shorter and yellow. Its leaves lack the white margins, and it has violet rather than white flowers.

Why is it weedy?

Seeds live a long time in the soil. Forms dense, impenetrable stands.

How does it spread?

Water, wind, contaminated soil and feed, machinery, wildlife and people. Fruit is not attractive to birds or other animals, but seeds can attach to animal fleeces and fur.

What damage does it do?

Thick stands displace native species in natural areas and create large ungrazable areas in farmland. Blocks access for animals and humans and may harbour pests such as rabbits and possums. Fruit is poisonous and dust from plants can cause respiratory irritation.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Scrub, poor pasture, wasteland, forest margins, sand dunes coastal areas. Prefers warm sunny situations in higher rainfall areas, favouring maritime habitats. More likely to be found in shaded areas but will grow on any soil type.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Grub out small plants removing all of root system.
2. Cut and paint stumps: apply triclopyr 600 EC (100ml/1L) or picloram gel to freshly cut stems.
3. Overall spray: triclopyr 600 EC (60ml/10l).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Follow up initial control regularly to remove seedlings.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Trevor James



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