



Old Man's Beard

Clematis vitalba

PEST PLANTS
EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Why should I be worried?

Old man's beard, *Clematis vitalba*, is a prolific seeding plant which grows vigorously on shrubs and trees up to 20 m or more. A plant is capable of forming a tangled, smothering mass, which can blanket an area up to 200 m², blocking out light and eventually topping and killing the supporting plants. Old man's beard is a major pest plant problem in New Zealand and threatens our native forests, reserves and garden shrubs. The seeds are dispersed by the wind during autumn/winter and can survive for several years in the soil.

There have been reports from England of cattle dying after eating old man's beard.

What does it look like?

Old man's beard is a clambering, deciduous, woody perennial climber. The creamy-white flowers are fragrant and up to 2 cm in diameter. The seeds, which follow in December, have long fluffy hairs, giving rise to its common name. The heart-shaped leaves are serrated, with five leaves per stem growing opposite each other. Young vines are fibrous, strongly ribbed and often coloured purple. Older vines are woody, flake when bent and are typically grey/brown in colour.



Old man's beard seeding profusely.

How do I control it?

Seedlings

Seedlings or immature plants can be pulled out.

Mature plants

1. Stump treatment

Trace the vines to where they are rooted to the ground. Clear away dirt to expose the rootball. Cut out the rootball and all connected roots in the ground or slice through the rootball and apply Vigilant gel to the rootball. Leave cut vines in trees to dry out, as any vines left on the ground will put down new roots.

2. Foliage spray

Cut vines in trees and shrubs about 1 m from ground during autumn/winter. Wait for new growth and spray vines during spring/summer with 6 mls of Tordon Brushkiller per litre of water plus 1 ml of penetrant per litre of water (knapsack rate).

Note: Spraying with herbicide is most successful when plants are sprayed before flowering and where vines have at least 1 m of foliage from the root. Each spring check the site for regrowth or seedlings and follow up either by hand weeding or repeat spraying. When spraying always follow the manufacturer's label if unsure.

What must I do?

Old man's beard is classified as a Suppression Pest Plant in the Greater Wellington Regional Pest Management Strategy.

- (1) Occupiers in the Wellington City Council territorial authority area are required to destroy all old man's beard plants within 10 m of their boundary following a complaint to GW. At the time of complaint, the complainant's land, within 10 m of the boundary, is required to be cleared or under clearance of old man's beard.
- (2) In all other areas of the Wellington region, occupiers are required to destroy all old man's beard whenever it appears on their property.

It is an offence to sell, propagate, or distribute old man's beard.



One plant is capable of smothering an area of 200 m².



Old man's beard flowers and seeds.

Where is it in our region?

Old man's beard is present throughout the region. It grows in habitats ranging from gardens to river margins, native bush, reserves, road and rail corridors, farmland and wasteland.

We're here to help you

If you need advice on how to control old man's beard or other pest plants contact Greater Wellington, Biosecurity (Plants).

Where does it come from?

Old man's beard is originally from Europe and south-western Asia. It was introduced to New Zealand as a decorative plant in 1905. Since then the species has spread widely and is common throughout the whole country except for Westland and Fiordland. It can even be found on the Chatham Islands.

Disclaimer

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