



## Weed Management Information

### Blackberry

**Botanical name:** *Rubus fruticosus* spp. aggregate

**Weed Class:** Class 4 noxious weed

**Legal requirements:** The growth of the plant must be managed in a manner that reduces its numbers, spread and incidence and continuously inhibits its reproduction and the plant must not be sold propagated or knowingly distributed.

#### Control options

Priorities for controlling blackberry must be developed when planning a management program. A good strategy is to keep clean areas free of blackberry and manage them in a way that prevents infestations. Target lightly infested areas as a priority to reduce the extent and minimise further spread. Extensive infestations are best tackled with the aim of reducing the area affected and ultimately fully controlling all plants over time.

**Manual control:** This is not generally suitable as seedlings and small plants are difficult to remove by hand. All of the root system should be removed as blackberry will regrow from fragments left in the soil.

**Mechanical:** Where extensive areas, dense infestations or vermin are involved, large earthmoving equipment may be necessary both to control blackberry and to destroy vermin burrows prior to revegetation. Scalping can be very successful on accessible infestations provided sufficient material is removed. Scalping to a depth of 20 to 30 cm is needed to ensure crowns and the majority of roots are removed. **Ensure that the area will not be subject to erosion and adhere to all environmental regulations.**

**Cultivation:** A single cultivation spreads rather than controls blackberry as root fragments are distributed over the cultivated area. To control and reduce blackberry infestations cultivation needs to be frequent. However, frequent cultivation will contribute to soil erosion and breakdown of the soil structure in many soils and is recommended only as an adjunct to other control techniques.

**Slashing:** This should be considered as short-term control because blackberry quickly regrows from the crown and roots. Regular and thorough slashing or mowing (fortnightly, monthly) forces the plant to regrow using up reserves stored in the root system and weakening the plant. Irregular slashing can leave the plant with a strong root system and little top growth. Slashing may also stimulate suckering. Slashing in summer can enhance the effect of the blackberry leaf rust fungus because the regrowth stimulated by the slashing is very susceptible to the rust.

**Grazing:** Concentrated grazing by goats and other browsers such as deer may suppress an infestation. Grazing must be continuous or regrowth will occur.

**Fire:** As a follow up to herbicide use to clear areas of dead canes and if fire is used to remove the top growth of healthy blackberry, regrowth will occur in a short period. Wait at least twelve months following herbicide use to allow the herbicide to penetrate plant roots and be fully effective.

**Biological control:** Blackberry leaf rust, *Phragmidium violaceum*, is a defoliating disease which attacks the leaves of blackberry. It can also be found on flower buds, unripe fruit and the green parts of growing canes. The rust appears as characteristic purple-brown blotches, 2 to 3 mm in diameter, on the upper surface of the leaf. Corresponding yellow or black powdery pustules of spores appear on the lower surface of the leaf. Heavily infected leaves turn brown, shrivel and fall from the canes. It may take many years of attack by the rust to weaken well-established blackberry infestations. In time the action of the rust will decrease extensive infestations, slow down the invasion of clean areas and make this aggressive weed less competitive with desirable vegetation. Blackberry that is not attacked by the rust in summer/ autumn should be assumed to be resistant and should be controlled by other means.

**Chemical control:** Use a herbicide that is registered for use on blackberry in NSW and in a manner and rate stated on the label (or a current pesticide order). Seek advice from a Council Vegetation Officer or your herbicide supplier. Please ensure the chosen product is suitable for the designated land use and situation. Please observe all environmental and safety cautions that are stated on the label.

### Description

A perennial shrub, with arching, entangling stems arising from a woody crown; forming thickets up to several metres high.

**Stems:** Canes arched or trailing up to 7m long, green, purplish/ red, smooth or moderately hairy, round or angled, with numerous curved or straight prickles of different sizes.

**Leaves:** Compound with 3 or 5 oval leaflets. Leaflets usually dark-green above and lighter green beneath, with small teeth around the edges.

**Flowers:** 2 to 3cm, growing in clusters on side of branches; 5 sepals and 5 white or pink petals.

**Dispersal:** Fruit are eaten by birds, foxes and other mammals which distribute seeds over wide areas. Seeds are transported by water along creeks, drains and rivers. Movement of contaminated soil and cultivation also spread blackberry.



**Blackberry with some rust evident on the leaves**

Photo: JM Iles and M Campbell



**Mature and immature blackberries**

Photo: JM Iles and M Campbell

**For further information:** Councils Vegetation Officers Ph: (02) 6499 2222

**Helpful websites** [www.southeastweeds.org.au](http://www.southeastweeds.org.au) [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds)

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