

T.I.P.S.

Targeted Invasive Plant Solutions

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Himalayan Blackberry



Himalayan Blackberry • *Rubus ulmifolius* or *R. discolor*

Legal Status

✓ Community Charter

Distribution

Currently found in BC in the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, Fraser Valley, Gulf Islands, central to southern Vancouver Island, Queen Charlotte Islands, the Okanagan, and the West Kootenay areas.

Identification

Flowers: Small (2.5 cm diameter), white to pinkish, stalked, 5-petaled, arranged in clusters of 5-20; flower stalks are woolly and prickly.

Stems: Robust, stiff, 5-angled stems (canes) that support large, flattened, and hooked or straight prickles. Canes grow to 3 m in height and up to 12 m in length. First year canes produce leaves only and can root at the tips, producing daughter plants. Second year canes grow from the axils of first year canes and produce flowers and fruits.

Leaves: Evergreen, predominantly large, rounded or oblong, toothed leaflets radiate from the end of the leaf stem. Leaves are generally grouped in fives on first-year canes and threes on flowering (second-year) canes.

Fruits: Fruits (drupelets) are up to 2 cm in diameter, oblong to spherical, black and shiny, and hairless. They form on second year canes and ripen from mid-summer to fall. Each berry produces numerous seeds that have a hard, impermeable coat.

Similar Native Species: (i) Trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) is a smaller and less robust trailing plant with a smaller stem size (0.5 cm), white waxy stem coating, deciduous leaves found in groups of three, and a tendency to lie on the ground; (ii) salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) has smaller zigzagged stems, red-pink flowers, and reddish or yellowish edible berries.

Similar Non-Native Species: Cut-leaf or evergreen blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*) has deeply incised leaflets. **Note:** Himalayan blackberry is a variable species with several cultivars, thus making identification difficult.

Ecological Characteristics

Habitat: Found on disturbed sites, along roadsides and right-of-ways, in pastures, along river and stream banks, freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, forest edges, and wooded ravines. Prefers rich, well-drained soils, but can grow well on a variety of barren, infertile soil types, a wide range of soil pH and textures, and is tolerant of periodic flooding by



Current Distribution in BC



Dots indicate species presence as recorded in IAPP (accessed March 15, 2008).

brackish or fresh water. Prefers full sunlight, but can survive in varied light conditions.

Reproduction: A mostly biennial plant that reproduces by seed, vegetatively by rooting at stem tips to form daughter plants, and sprouts from root buds. Plants begin flowering in spring with fruit ripening in midsummer to late August. Thickets can produce 7,000-13,000 seeds per square meter, and seeds can remain viable in the soil for several years. Fruiting stems generally die back at the end of the season, but non-fruiting stems may persist for several years before producing fruit.

Dispersal: Primarily dispersed by root and stem fragments. Birds and omnivorous mammals, such as foxes, bears, and coyotes can consume berries and disperse seeds. Humans also contribute to blackberry spread by purposefully planting canes.

Impacts

Ecological: Outcompetes low growing native vegetation through shading and build-up of leaf litter and dead stems. Can prevent the establishment of shade intolerant trees such as Garry oak and ponderosa pine. Himalayan blackberry forms large, dense, impenetrable thickets that limit the movement of large animals, takes over stream channels and stream banks, and reduces sight lines along right-of-ways. Thickets increase flooding and erosion potential by preventing the establishment of deep-rooted native shrubs that would otherwise provide bank stability.



B. Brown

Integrated Pest Management

IPM is a decision making process that includes identification and inventory of invasive plant populations, assessment of the risks that they pose, development of well-informed control options that may include a number of methods, site treatment, and monitoring.

Prevention

- Monitor for Himalayan blackberry on both disturbed and undisturbed areas.
- Do not purchase, trade, or grow Himalayan blackberry. Instead, grow regional native plants as they are naturally adapted to the local environment and are non-invasive.
- Ensure soil, gravel, and other fill material are not contaminated.
- Avoid unloading, parking, or storing equipment and vehicles in infested areas.
- Remove plants, plant parts, and seeds from personal gear, clothing, pets, vehicles, and equipment. Wash vehicles, including tires and undercarriage, and equipment at designated cleaning sites before leaving infested areas.
- Bag or tarp plants, plant parts, and seeds before transporting to a designated disposal site (e.g. landfill).
- Take special care when controlling Himalayan blackberry near streams, or ditch lines, to prevent the movement of plant parts downstream.
- Maintain or establish healthy plant communities that are resistant to invasion by invasive plants.

Mechanical Control

- Mowing, including the use of riding mowers and tractor-mounted mowers, can be very effective, but can also harm desirable species. If roots are not manually removed, mowing several times per year over several years is necessary to exhaust root reserves. If mowing or cutting is only done once per year, it should be done when the plants begin to flower. Do not mow where soil is highly susceptible to compaction or erosion, or where soil is very wet.
- Persistent cultivation (tillage) or cutting in combination with mowing can be very effective. Because mechanical control can stimulate strong regrowth, follow-up with either spot applications of herbicide or hand digging to remove the entire root system.
- Grazing by goats has proven effective.
- Monitor controlled infestations throughout growing season.
- **Disposal:** If plants are cut, all plant material must be collected in bags or tarps and incinerated or bagged and deeply buried at a landfill. Care should be taken to ensure that plant parts are not distributed during transport.

Biocontrol

- There are no biocontrol agents available for Himalayan blackberry. The release of herbivorous insects has not been undertaken due to the risk these insects may pose to closely related, commercially important *Rubus* species.

Chemical Control

Herbicide recommendations and use must first consider site characteristics and be prescribed based on site goals and objectives. Herbicide labels and other sources of information must be reviewed before selecting and applying herbicides.

- Effective herbicides include: metsulfuron-methyl, 2,4-D, triclopyr, and glyphosate.
- Application: The use of a wick, selective spot (foliar) spraying, or stem injection/cut surface applications is recommended to minimize non-target damage. Foliar applications of metsulfuron-methyl are most effective when applied prior to fall leaf discoloration.
- Application of herbicides on Crown land must be carried out following a confirmed Pest Management Plan (*Integrated Pest Management Act*) and under the supervision of a certified pesticide applicator.
www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ipmp/index.html

References and Links to Further Information

- BC Ministry of Forests and Range, Invasive Alien Plant Program. www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/Plants/application.htm
- *Controlling Himalayan Blackberry in the Pacific Northwest*. The Nature Conservancy. <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/moredocs/rubarm01.pdf>
- E-Flora BC, an Electronic Atlas of the Plants of BC. www.eflora.bc.ca
- *King County Noxious Weed Control Program: Best Management Practices for Himalayan blackberry*. King County, Washington. <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wrl/lands/weeds/pdf/blackberry-control.pdf>
- *Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team: Best Practices for Himalayan Blackberry Management*. http://www.goert.ca/pubs_invasive.php