If you would like weed identification, site-specific control recommendations or additional noxious weed information, contact the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program.

San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program
2014

P.O. Box 1634 / 62 Henry Road #26
Eastsound, WA 98245
(360) 376-3499

info@sanjuanweeds.org

Thanks to The Nature Conservancy (Jonathan Soll)

Himalayan and Evergreen Blackberries

(***Rubus armeniacus, and R. laciniatus***)

Class C noxious weed

(Control encouraged but not required by law)

Photo credit: SJCNWCP

Why control Himalayan and evergreen blackberries?

These non-native shrubs pose threats to our oak savannahs, rocky balds and open meadows by overtaking and replacing native shrubs, forbs and grasses. A single fast-growing Himalayan blackberry shrub will first appear as an individual cane, then as clusters of canes, gradually increasing in size to form an impenetrable thicket.

About Himalayan and evergreen blackberries

Each has tall upright, then arching canes reaching several yards in length, and armed with numerous heavy, recurved prickles. These biennial canes grow from a perennial underground burl-like root crown. First-year canes bear leaves but not flowers. Second-year canes bear numerous white to pinkish flowers and edible fruit, then die at the end of the season. Blackberries reproduce by seed, suckers and by daughter plants when the stem tips contact soil. Seeds, dispersed by birds, remain viable for several years.

Himalayan and evergreen blackberries have alternate, palmately compound leaves, divided into three to five toothed leaflets, with short prickles on the stalks and the underside of leaf veins. The two species are easily distinguished by looking at the difference in the shape and color of their foliage: evergreen blackberry leaves are deeply incised, jagged-toothed and green on both the upper and lower leaf surfaces, whereas the much less incised Himalayan blackberry leaves, though green above, are a paler grayish-green below.

Himalaya leaf

Evergreen leaf

.

Blackberry Removal

By law, herbicides must be used in strict accordance with label instructions.

Research on effective and safe herbicide use is on-going and often contradictory. For more recent information contact the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program.

Timing:

Blackberry removal is best done from late June through September when most of the plant's energy is devoted to flowering and fruiting. During winter and spring, blackberry thickets provide protective cover for birds and small mammals.

Tools for blackberry removal:

- Heavy leather gloves and protective clothing
- Brush cutter, loppers, claw mattock, or backhoe
- Appropriate herbicide and equipment, if needed.

Remove the above-ground biomass first, thus making the shrubs easier to dig out and reducing the amount of herbicide, if applied.

Mechanical Control:

Pulling: Uproot 1st year and shade-suppressed weaker plants when the soil is moist and loose. Firmly grab the stem near its base (or use a weed wrench) to extract the crowns.

Hand digging: Use a claw mattock to loosen the dirt around the plant's roots before pulling them out. Extracting the roots from deep, loamy, sandy or damp soil is easier, and less damaging to the surrounding area, than is trying to remove them from rocky or dry soil.

Backhoe: Dig out the root crowns and major roots using a backhoe with mechanical thumb or claw.

Cutting: Use a mower, brushcutter, machete, or loppers to repeatedly cut the above-ground vegetation. Although effective in reducing plant biomass, this method requires years of treatment unless augmented with an herbicide. As with other perennial invasive plants, if only a single yearly cutting is made, the best time to do so is when the plant is in bud or flower stage, but before it produces seed.

Biological controls:

Targeted grazing: Goats can reduce and control invasive blackberries. Sheep also browse blackberries, but less effectively.

Chemical control:

Timing: Systemic herbicide application is most effective when the soil is moist and in early spring, when carbohydrates move from crown to buds, or in the fall when movement is from leaves to the crown. Avoid using herbicides when soil is dry or plants are stressed. Adding a dye marker to the mixture will reduce the amount of herbicide used.

Cut stump treatment: In late spring, or early fall, apply triclopyr (e.g. Blackberry and Brush Killer™, Garlon™) and/or glyphosate (e.g..Roundup™) directly to the cambial area around the edges of freshly cut stumps. Application should be made within 10 minutes of cutting to ensure effectiveness.

Spot spray: Cut the plant in mid-summer and then allow it to resprout to about 18 inches. In late September through early November, apply triclopyr and/or glyphosate to the fully leafed new growth. Spot spraying is less effective when plants are drought stressed or have not fully leafed out.

Basal/Stem sprays: In fall, apply higher concentration of an oil-based triclopyr to the basal portion of selected stems. The oil surfactant is necessary for the mixture to penetrate the bark and enter the vascular system.

Follow-up: Immediately re-seed bare areas with native or sterile grasses, particularly after removing dense blackberry stands, to reduce erosion and subsequent weed invasions.
Mechanical: Hand hoe, or pull seedlings.
*Biocontrol***:** Graze goats or sheep in areas where the mature plants have been removed.
Chemical: Apply a selective broadleaf herbicide as a follow-up treatment to protect newly planted grass. The Nature Conservancy recommends the following: cut stump treat or spot-spray resprouted canes with 2-3% Garlon 3a and 1% non-ionic surfactant or a 2% glyphosate / 1% (or less) triclopyr mixture with a 1% non-ionic surfactant.

What to do with the remains: The canes can be brush-mowed/chipped, burned (if permissible), or left in place, though the cuttings must be prevented from sprouting.

Native trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus)*: This evergreen, perennial, prostrate vine is our only native blackberry. It provides delicious small sized fruit.