

# Elaeagnus

## *Elaeagnus x reflexa*

**Progressive Control Plant under the  
West Coast Regional Pest Plant  
Management Strategy**



### National Pest Plant Accord Status

Elaeagnus is not listed on the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA), i.e. it's not currently banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. However as of 2011, it is listed as a pest plant in a number of New Zealand regions including Auckland, Canterbury, Bay of Plenty and the West Coast (where control is required in the Coast Road and Karamea—Little Wanganui Progressive Control Areas).

### Where has Elaeagnus come from?

Elaeagnus x reflexa, also known as Elaeagnus hybrid, E. pungens, E. glabra and E. 'variegata' is thought to have come from Japan originally. It was brought to New Zealand as a garden plant, primarily for hedging.

### What does Elaeagnus look like?

Elaeagnus is a vigorous scrambling evergreen shrub which can climb to 20m with support (standing trees). The plants have tough root systems which sends up suckers. Stems are long and arching, brown and scaly when young and becoming spiny as they grow older. The oval leaves, green on top and silver on the underside blotched with brown scale, are arranged alternately on the stems. The small whitish flowers form in small drooping clusters from March to May and these are followed by pale reddish-brown fruit each containing one ribbed seed.

Although plants can set viable seed which may be spread by birds, the plant is usually spread by root suckering or revegetation from layered stems, i.e. when stems touch the ground they can take root.

### Why is Elaeagnus a Pest Plant?

This plant is tough, long lived, is not grazed by animals and fixes nitrogen which improves soils so that native plants which may have grown there previously do not. The plant's scrambling habit smothers other shrubs and trees and the suckering root system makes it difficult to get rid of.

Elaeagnus is tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions from drought to wet, high to low temperatures, wind, salt and variable soil types.

Plants have usually spread out from hedging around old homesteads to invade marginal land in the area such as roadsides, abandoned farm land, cliff areas and wasteland.



Top right: *Elaeagnus* leaves and fruit [ARC]  
Above: *Elaeagnus* plant in flower [ARC]

## What are the best methods of control?

Elaeagnus is a difficult plant to eradicate so be prepared to carry out repeat control work. Suckering from old roots can be a problem.

### **Manual Methods**

Dig out plants with machinery and then dry and burn all roots and stems (to prevent revegetation). Other options may be deep burial of all plant parts or disposal to lined landfill.

### **Herbicide Methods**

A mixture of the following may be needed depending on the height and size of the infestation.

- **Stump swabbing:** cut/slash stems down to just above ground level, peel back any bark and swab with concentrated herbicide. Suitable herbicides are glyphosate products (Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller) OR picloram + triclopyr products (Tordon Gold, Tordon Brushkiller) OR Vigilant Gel. Dispose of cut stems to lined landfill or dry and burn. Cover the cut stumps for a year with black plastic or heavy sacking to cut out light to prevent roots from re-suckering.
- **Stem injection:** (best done in autumn). Drill holes sloping into the sapwood at regular intervals around the tree. As each hole is drilled pour in herbicide concentrate, wait until it drains down and pour in more. Suitable herbicides are glyphosate products (Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller etc) at 250ml/1L water OR metsulfuron-methyl products (Escort, Zeal) at 20gm/1L water OR picloram—triclopyr products (Tordon Gold, Tordon Brushkiller).
- **Frilling:** using a sharp axe or chisel, make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ringbark the plant. Immediately apply herbicide concentrate with a squeeze bottle or paintbrush. Suitable herbicides are glyphosate products (Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller etc) at 250ml/1L water OR picloram—triclopyr products (Tordon Gold, Tordon Brushkiller).
- **Spraying:** (best for small plants and regrowth). Use glyphosate products at 300ml/1L water for knapsack sprayer or 2L/100L water for spraygun OR metsulfuron-methyl products at 5gm/10L water OR picloram—triclopyr products at 12ml/1L water (both with your choice of applicator). Repeat treatment at regular intervals.

**For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling**

### **Biocontrols**

There are no known biocontrol agents for Elaeagnus at present.

## Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

**Mary Trayes:** Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

**Tom Belton:** Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

*The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.*