

# Tradescantia

## *Tradescantia fluminensis*

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



### National Pest Plant Accord Status

Tradescantia is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa)

### Where has it come from?

Tradescantia fluminensis is native to the tropical rainforests of Brazil. It was introduced to many countries, including New Zealand, as an easy-care house plant and outdoor ground cover. Tradescantia has long since escaped controlled household or garden settings and become a major pest plant in many parts of New Zealand including the West Coast. Tradescantia has a 'trailing habit' and was more commonly known in the past as "Wandering Willie" or "Wandering Jew."

### What does Tradescantia look like?

Tradescantia can be recognised by its dark green, oval shining leaves which are from 3-6 cm long. It has a trailing form with very short stems and under ideal conditions, can form a succulent, creeping carpet up to 50cm thick on the forest floor. Despite producing clusters of small, white three petalled flowers from August to November the Tradescantia has not been known to set seed in New Zealand, all reproduction being stem fragments which take root very easily. The preferred habitat of Tradescantia is shady, damp forest floor areas (which abound on the West Coast).



Top right : Tradescantia leaf detail [P Bendle]

Above: Tradescantia infestation, Taranaki [terrain.net.nz]

### Why is Tradescantia a Pest Plant?

Thick carpets of Tradescantia, in both garden or natural forest settings suppress other plant growth by altering leaf litter decomposition, altering the nutrient cycle and blocking light. This particularly hinders the re-vegetation of native seedlings in podocarp-broadleaf forests.

Tradescantia is difficult to control because the plant can revegetate from stems only 1 cm long. Such small stems are apt to be overlooked when manual control work is being carried out while herbicide control methods are apt to kill non-target species as well.

The spread of Tradescantia into forest and stream margins on the West Coast has aided in many places by the inappropriate dumping of garden waste.

## What are the best methods of control?

As Tradescantia is a problem both within home gardens and the public domain, a wide variety of methods, some 'home-grown' ones have been devised to combat it. Choose the one which best suits your situation.

### Manual Methods

To clear small patches of Tradescantia for re-planting, hand weed carefully 2-3 times. If convenient use boiling water to finish off any 'wayward' stems or even use it for the whole patch.

To clear medium - large areas of Tradescantia, rake up bulk of the material then roll it up), followed by hand-weeding, boiling water treatment or spot spraying depending on the location.

If practical, consider allowing poultry to free range over larger patches of Tradescantia. Geese particularly like it and will do a thorough job of scouting out stems which can otherwise revegetate.

**NOTE:** Ensure every piece of Tradescantia you remove is disposed of to lined landfill in black plastic bags. If you need to stockpile material for any reason place the pile on black plastic. Do **NOT** compost.

### Herbicide Methods

There are two methods of applying herbicide for Tradescantia control.

- **Spraying:** If you have no concern about losing other plants, spray the Tradescantia with a knapsack sprayer or weed-wiper ensuring you get even cover over all leaves. If working near a waterway use a Glyphosate based products (Roundup, Glyphosate 360 etc) , but if not try either Triclopyr (Grazon, Victory) or Amitrole (Amitrole 4L) based products. Always add a penetrant, e.g. Pulse, to make the herbicide more effective and be sure to do follow-up applications. Some choices are:

*Roundup G2: 220mls + 10ml Penetrant + 10 litres of water*

*Grazon: 50mls + 10ml Penetrant + 10 litres of water*

*Amitrol 4L: 200mls + 10mls Penetrant + 10 litres of water*

- **Gel Treatment:** If you have concerns for other in area you want to control, spread herbicide concentrate systematically over the Tradescantia using a paint roller (i.e. put the herbicide in a paint tray or similar). You can either use herbicides as above OR a prepared gel such as Vigilant. Put your full weight over the roller while working because crushing the Tradescantia ensures better uptake of the herbicide. Take care with cleaning up and storage of the roller and tray afterwards.

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

### Biocontrol Methods

A biological control, the Tradescantia Leaf Beetle is now available for Tradescantia control. For more information please contact the WCRC Weedbusters Co-ordinator.

## 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.*