

Weeds & Pest Plants of Norfolk Island

Inkweed

Phytolacca octandra

Common names:

Inkweed, Dye-Berry, Red-ink plant

Family:

Phytolaccaceae

Origin:

Tropical South and Central America

Description:

A bushy and spreading perennial subshrub commonly growing to 1m in height but reaching to 2m if supported.

Stems are hollow and brittle, growing slightly woody at the base and supported by a large, brittle taproot. Stems are light green, sometimes reddish and have numerous white dots of crystalline calcium oxalate inside.

Leaves are large, oval-shaped (5-25cm long x 1-8cm wide) and light green when young

but can change to reddish/purple. Flower clusters are produced along the main stem. These are dense, erect clusters of pale flowers that develop into purple/black inky berries.

How do they spread?

Spread by seed. Seeds are juicy and loved by birds. Seeds can also be spread in soil or through watercourses.

Why are they an issue?

Inkweed are competitive, fast maturing plants that produce prolific amounts of viable and easily dispersed seed. They are pioneer plants that are often the first colonisers of disturbed ground and can quickly cover and outcompete an area of other native species.

Where are they likely to occur?

Island wide, particularly in disturbed ground.



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How can I control it?

- Small plants can easily be pulled by hand but larger plants will snap off and leave the taproot in the ground.
- Cut and paste - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) or metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) to the entire cut stem.
- Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall, or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the adjuvant recommended on the label.
- Apply glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at a rate of 20ml/L plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L) to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) plants
OR
- apply metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 0.5g/L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) + organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L). Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts.
- In a pasture situation apply picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/l and triclopyr 300g/l active ingredient at 6ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant.

Note:

Triclopyr and picloram herbicides are 'grass friendly' but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants.

Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach and kill other plants.

Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.

