

Weed of the month - November 2004

Smilax

Also known as **bridal creeper**

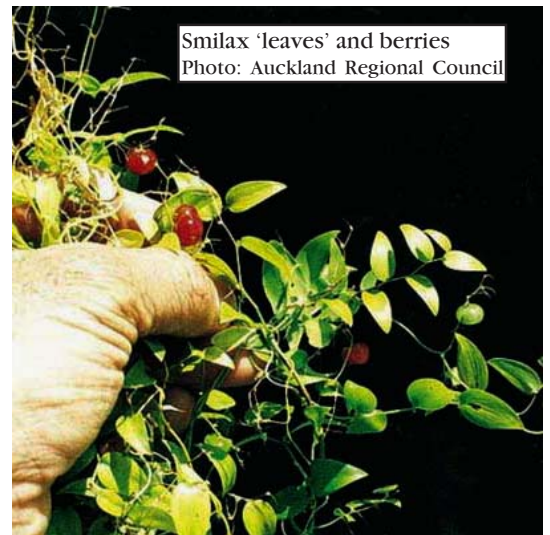
Botanical name: *Asparagus asparagoides*

Asparagus = asparagus. *Asparagoides* = asparagus like

Family: Liliaceae (Lily family)

Identification:

- Scrambling or climbing perennial **vine** with **twisted, wiry** stems.
- White, fleshy tuberous (**tubers = underground stems**) roots in clusters.
- 'Leaves' are actually cladodes (flattened, leaf-like stems), **almond shaped** with one at each node (place on the stem where a leaf or bud grows out). 'Leaves' typically 10 to 35 mm x 4 to 15 mm, with 7 veins.
- Small, **greenish-white flowers** occur where 'leaves' join the stem, and can be present from July to August. Flowers followed by round, **red berries** containing 2 to 8 tiny **black seeds**.



Smilax 'leaves' and berries
Photo: Auckland Regional Council



Smilax destroying a forest in Australia - Photo: K. McAlpine

Why is it a problem?

Smilax smothers low growing plants and seedlings, forming dense patches and eliminating vulnerable coastal native species in some instances. It is tolerant of sun, shade and low rainfall. Smilax produces lots of seed, dispersed by birds. The tubers are tough, long-lived and will resprout if moved elsewhere.

Status

Smilax is an unwanted organism and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution within New Zealand.

Where is it a problem?

Smilax prefers to grow in low, disturbed forests and forest margins, in waste places, hedgerows, on roadside banks and in coastal places.

Control

Smaller, scattered plants can be grubbed out, taking care to remove and dispose of all tubers carefully. Larger plants can be treated with an appropriate herbicide during spring and summer. Follow-up monitoring and treatment (6 monthly) is important. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil and waterways.



Smilax root tubers and 'leaves' - Photo: H. Braithwaite

For more information on weeds, please email weeds@ecan.govt.nz.

Or visit:

www.ecan.govt.nz/weeds