

Spanish Heath

Botanical name: *Erica lusitanica*

Erica (Lat.) = heath; *lusitanica* (Lat.) = of Lusitania (Portugal)

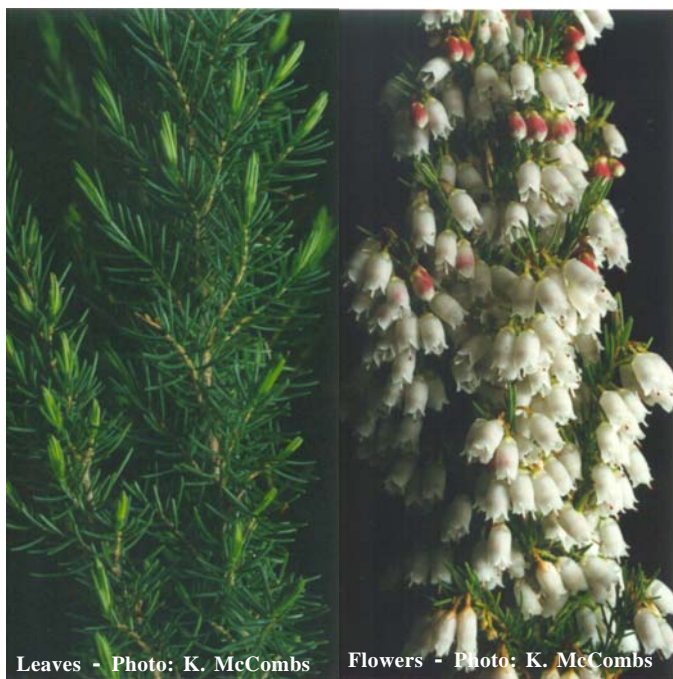
Family: Ericaceae

Identification

- Woody, upright, perennial evergreen shrub, up to 2m tall.
- Leaves are light green, needle-like and 3-7mm long.
- Leaves are arranged around the stem in groups (whorls) of three to four.
- A showy mass of small, white to pink, bell-shaped flowers occur from March-December in terminal clusters.
- Fruit are smooth capsules about 3mm diameter, containing many very fine seeds.



Photo: A. Paltridge



Leaves - Photo: K. McCombs

Flowers - Photo: K. McCombs

Why is it a problem?

Spanish heath forms dense stands, inhibiting the recruitment of other plant species, especially in disturbed areas, fernlands, tussock grasslands, roadsides and forestry sites. It produces many well-dispersed seeds. Spanish heath tolerates wet to moderately dry conditions, warm and cold temperatures and prefers acid soils.

Control

Small plants are best hand pulled. Larger plants or dense thickets can be sprayed with herbicide but thorough coverage is necessary. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil and waterways. Adding a couple of handfuls of lime to the soil around the plant will kill Spanish heath by making the soil too alkaline.

Status

Spanish heath is listed in the Regional Pest Management Strategy and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution within Canterbury.

For more information, please contact weeds@ecan.govt.nz

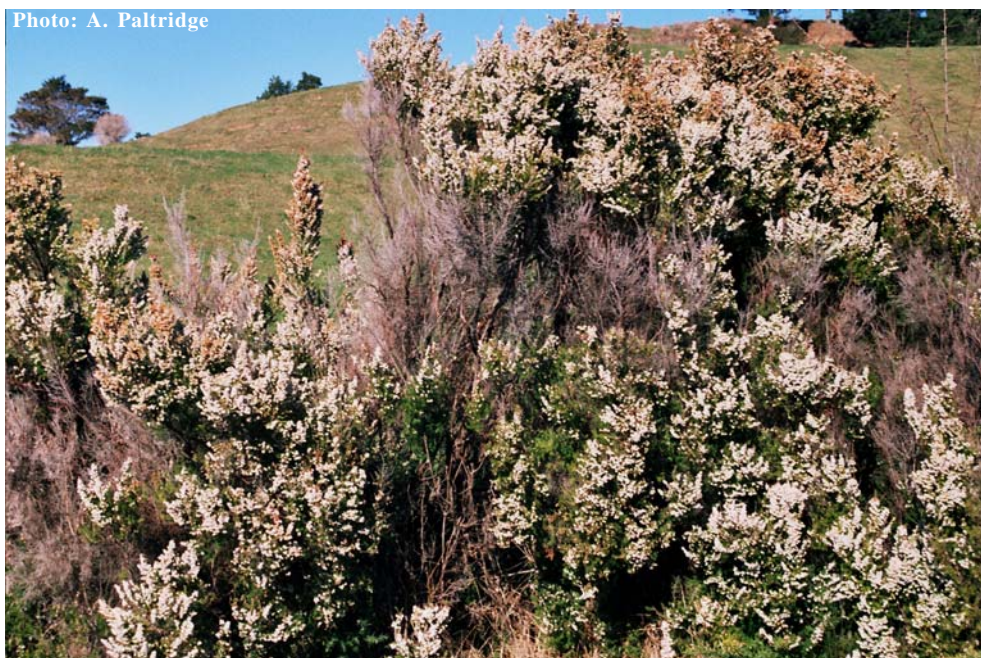


Photo: A. Paltridge