

Climbing spindle berry

Also known as oriental bittersweet

Botanical name: *Celastrus orbiculatus*
(*Celastrus se-las-trus*; = an evergreen shrub)

Family: Celastraceae

Identification:

- A climbing vine or shrub that can grow up to **12m tall**.
- Stems are round and **greyish-brown** in colour.
- Young twigs are green and often have **short, sharp spines**.
- Leaves are round or oval in shape with **finely serrated edges**.
- During autumn, the leaves **turn yellow** and drop off.
- **Yellow/orange** seed capsules are present during the winter.
- The outer surface of the roots, is **bright orange**.



Climbing spindleberry leaf colour change. Photo: E. Cameron



Climbing spindleberry fruit and leaves. Photo: C. Buddenhagen



Climbing spindleberry leaves and fruit. Photo: K. McCombs

Why is it a problem?

Climbing spindle berry can rapidly climb through native forests and shrublands, strangling plants and overtopping canopies, causing them to collapse. The stems can layer, becoming so solid that they form dense thickets, and the roots will sucker. This species is frost tolerant. The fruit is eaten by birds, who can disperse seed into forests where it becomes difficult to control.

Status

Classed as an unwanted organism, climbing spindle berry is banned from propagation, distribution and sale throughout New Zealand.

Control

Climbing spindle berry is very difficult to kill. Dig out small plants. Larger plants can be cut at ground level and the stump treated with herbicide. For large stands, cut and dispose of stems in autumn; spray regrowth in spring. Remove as much cut material as possible. 6-monthly follow up is necessary until completely eradicated.

Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil and waterways.



Photo: A. Paltridge



Climbing spindleberry invasion. Photo: S. Timmins



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