

European spindle tree

Euonymus europaeus



Identification

- Deciduous, fast-growing shrub or small tree up to 6 m high, with green, angular branches
- Leaves up to 10 cm long with serrated edge; leaves turn red in autumn
- Small greenish-yellow flowers with four petals in spring
- Bright-pink seed capsules resembling a pastor's hat, split open to reveal four bright-orange, poisonous fleshy seeds in autumn.



European spindle tree leaves in winter Photo: M. von Tippelskirch



European spindle tree Main photo: Weedbusters. Inset: C. Howell

Where is it found?

In gardens, disturbed sites, scrub, regenerating forest and extensively grazed areas.

Why is it a problem?

European spindle tree produces root suckers and bird-dispersed seeds. It can form dense stands which prevent the establishment of native plants.

Similar species

Japanese spindle tree (*Euonymus japonicus*) (also a weed) is similar but evergreen, and has glossy, more rounded leaves and round seed capsules.

Control

Pull small plants out. Cut bigger plants near ground level and paint with herbicide or spray the entire plant. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil or waterways. Monitor the site for re-growth for at least two years.



European spindle tree seed capsules Photo: Plant Protection Society