

Wild thyme

Thymus vulgaris

Family Lamiaceae



Identification

- A small, bushy shrub that can grow up to 30 cm tall.
- Mauve or white flowers are arranged in whorls on the upper stems.
- Flowering occurs from September to December.
- The narrow, green, hairy leaves are attached to square, semi-woody stems.
- When crushed, the leaves produce a strong, pleasant smell.



Wild thyme flowers. Photo: G. Bradfield (ECan)



Scattered wild thyme plants. Photo: C. Howell (DOC)

Where is it found?

Wild thyme was first introduced into the country as a culinary herb. Since then it has jumped the garden fence and is now a common sight in Central Otago. In Canterbury, small populations have been found near Loburn, in the upper Rangitata River and a lone plant was found growing along the roadside near Twizel. Wild thyme can be found growing on dry, stony, grassy slopes and terraces.

Why is it a problem?

Wild thyme is very tolerant of both dry and cold conditions and is unpalatable to stock. In these situations it can form large dense patches, covering hillsides. It can exclude native vegetation and in turn becomes the dominant scrub cover.

Wild thyme is a prolific seeder. Seeds are primarily dispersed by gravity, soil movement and people.

Status

Wild thyme is classified as a 'Biodiversity Pest' in the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy (2005-2015).

If you think you have found wild thyme, please contact Environment Canterbury or the Potential Pest Hotline on (03) 363 9380.



Small wild thyme infestation. Photo: T. Broughton (ECan)