

Boxthorn

Lycium ferocissimum



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Family

Solanaceae (nightshade) family

Also known as

African boxthorn

Where is it originally from?

South Africa

What does it look like?

Densely branched, erect, evergreen shrub to 6 m tall with tough, woody stems alternately branched at square angles, forming a box-like pattern, and with rigid 13 mm spines. Hairless, fleshy, bright green leaves (40 x 12 mm) are narrow, oblong and clustered along the stems. White to pale mauve flowers (10-13 mm) produced from July to March, followed by tear shaped orange red berries (5-12 mm) in autumn.

Are there any similar species?

Hawthorn and barberry are similar. *Lycium barbarum* (L. chinense) is similar but is deciduous. Alternatives: Try a native pittosporum or coprosma, or non-native silk tassel bush (*Garrya elliptica*) or evergreen hydrangea (*Dichroa versicolor*). Your local garden centre will be able to recommend other non-weedy alternatives that will grow well in your area.

Why is it weedy?

Forms dense, tall, long-lived stands, excluding most other vegetation. Tolerates a wide variety of soil types (sand to rocky cliffs), drought, salt, wind, and hot to cold temperatures. Poisonous (usually not grazed). Aggressively colonises high light areas, particularly sand dunes, estuary margins, other coast areas, and limits access for recreation.

How does it spread?

Birds and possibly possums. Common seed sources are farm hedges, roadsides, waste places.

What damage does it do?

Overtops native plants and can become only woody plant species on site. Petrels and other seabirds can become entangled and die. Berries may poison birds.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Sand dunes, shrublands, cliffs, islands and other coastal areas, gravel, and roadsides.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Hand pull seedlings, winch out larger plants (all year round). Plant material can be left on site.
2. Stump swab (all year round): glyphosate (200ml/L) or Tordon Brushkiller (200ml/L).
3. Frilling: With a sharp chisel or axe, make a deep cut into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant. Immediately apply glyphosate (250ml/L) or undiluted Tordon Brushkiller to each cut.
4. Injection method: Drill holes sloping into the sapwood at regular intervals around the tree. Inject glyphosate (250ml/L) or undiluted Tordon Brushkiller into holes. If necessary wait until the liquid subsides then apply the remainder.



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5. Spray (all year round): glyphosate (10ml/L + penetrant). Preferably treat coastal sites after rain to lessen effect of salt on herbicide. Total coverage needed.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Untreated stumps regrow after slashing. Not controlled by fire. Prefers open sites so revegetation programme should follow clearance that leaves bare ground.