

## WEED FILE: INKWEED

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Inkweed – *Phytolacca octandra*

### DESCRIPTION

Inkweed is a soft-wooded, leafy perennial shrub that grows to about 2 metres tall. It is native to South and Central America.

Flowers are green and are followed by dense cylindrical clusters of dark purple-black berries, which when smashed exude a dark staining reddish purple juice (hence the name inkweed).

The leaves are initially light green, darkening with maturity, at which time they are 15cm long by 5 cm wide and of a pointed oval shape. Both berries and leaves are unpalatable and mildly poisonous to stock, and are therefore rarely grazed.

Stems are initially reddish and soft but with age become woody, hollow and extensively branched. The bush has a substantial, fleshy taproot.

Inkweed prefers to grow in disturbed and bare ground including open areas, and also in burned bush and waste areas. It is suppressed to some extent by frosts, but not killed. Instead in locations with significant frost inkweed will become an annual, dying back to its base in winter and regrowing from there in the spring.

The plant grows readily from seeds distributed by birds into any accommodating locations.

Inkweed is found from Auckland south in the North Island, and in the top of the South Island to Kaikoura, plus on Banks Peninsula. In suitable bare ground locations it can form large and dense stands.

### PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Inkweed will generally not successfully invade good quality pasture with a well-developed sward.

### GRUBBING-OUT

Individual plants and isolated clumps can be grubbed out successfully at any time, taking care to minimise soil disturbance on the site.



### HERBICIDE CONTROL

There are several methods of using herbicides to control inkweed. In all cases the optimum time to treat the plant is when it is most actively growing, which is generally from October to April. If spraying frost-damaged plants, it is important to wait until there is adequate foliage regrowth to receive and absorb the spray.

#### Cut and Swab

Larger isolated bushes can be slashed close to the ground and the stumps painted with a mix of 2g **MSF600** in 1 litre of water.

#### Spot Spraying

- **GrassMate** at 6m/L applied anytime to whole plant. Grass friendly, but will suppress clover. Make sure that complete coverage is achieved, especially as mature bushes can be both large and dense.
- **Glyphosate 360g/L** applied at 1L per 100L water, plus 100ml **SuperWetter** penetrant. Or **Granny** at 450g per 100L water, plus 100ml **SuperWetter** penetrant. This option is not grass friendly.
- **MSF600** herbicide applied at 50g per 100L water, plus 100ml **SprayWetter** penetrant. This option is not pasture grass friendly, but will not normally harm native grasses.

#### Spot Treatment

- **Buckshot** granules applied dry at 30g per square metre to the soil beneath the canopy of the bush (i.e. within the drip line). Best applied from late winter to late spring.

#### Boom Spraying

- **2,4-D Granules** applied at 1-1.5kg/Ha is effective as a boom spray against inkweed seedlings (no bigger than 4 leaves). However in most circumstances spot spraying of individual bushes and stands (as above) is more satisfactory.