



Tree privet - *Ligustrum lucidum*

Chinese privet – *Ligustrum sinense*



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DESCRIPTION

Note: Tree privet and Chinese privet are related and very similar species. Differences between them are noted in this weed file but as they present essentially the same problems and require identical control measures, the two species are for practical purposes treated as if they were the same.

Both privet species were introduced to NZ from China as ornamental and hedging plants. Privet has since become a highly invasive pest plant, and in some regions of NZ the plant is subject to Pest Plant Management Strategies, and may not be sold, propagated or distributed.

Tree privet is a hardy, fast-growing evergreen shrub/tree that grows up to 10 metres in height. Chinese privet is similar but smaller, generally reaching only 5 metres in height.

The leaves of the privet species are a useful distinguishing feature. The leaves of the tree privet are larger (up to 13cm long), dark green and glossy on the upper surface, and generally have a sharply-defined oval shape with a pointed tip and clean edges. The Chinese privet by contrast has leaves that are smaller with a dull green upper surface, with a less-sharply oval shape and slightly wavy edges, a more rounded tip, and a hairy mid-rib on the undersurface.

Flowers are white in both species; the tree privet flowers November to March while the Chinese privet flowers from July to March.

Both species produce dense clusters of black or purple-black berries.

The fruit and leaves of both are poisonous, and are widely-held to contribute to allergies and asthma, in spite of privet being insect-pollinated and so not generating wind-blown pollen.

DISTRIBUTION

Tree privet occurs in the North Island only, mostly in North Auckland, Auckland and Bay of Plenty. Chinese privet also occurs mainly from Bay of Plenty northwards, but has been recorded south to Wellington and around Nelson.

The common habitat for invasive privet is around gardens, forest margins and roadsides. Both privet species will rapidly colonise waste areas or stands of trees, and will readily displace native plants in regenerating sites.

Privet spreads via birds eating the berries and then scattering them in their droppings, and also following human plantings that escape and then spread to invasive proportions.

MANUAL CONTROL

Pulling or grubbing out seedlings is effective, and should be done before any seeds present ripen. Removed material can then be mulched or composted.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Because of its heritage as a hedge, privet is often found growing wild in close proximity to horticultural and other sensitive sites where the hedges were located, so care must be taken to avoid spray drift damage to valuable adjacent plants.

HANDGUN SPRAYING

- **Glyphosate 360** sprayed at 1 litre per 100L water, with 200ml of **SuperWetter** penetrant added. For **Granny** glyphosate granules use 450g/100L.
- **MSF600** at 35g plus 200ml **SuperWetter** per 100 litres of water.

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- **Glyphosate 360** sprayed at 225ml per 15L of water, with 30ml of **SuperWetter** penetrant added. For **Granny** glyphosate granules use 100g/15L.
- **MSF600** at 5g plus 30ml of **SuperWetter** per 15 litres of water.

CUT STEM AND INJECT

This is a very effective control method in situations where the size of the plant or its proximity to vulnerable valuable species makes spraying impractical. It is essential that the herbicide is applied as soon as possible after the cuts are made.

- **MSF600** at 20g plus 10ml **SuperWetter** in 1 litre of water. Make downward cuts with machete or axe around the base of trees, cutting into the sap wood. Inject the herbicide mixture into the fresh cuts to the point of runoff.
- **Glyphosate 360** or **450** used neat and applied as above is also effective.

FELL AND STUMP SWAB

Where the situation allows the large privet tree can be felled entirely and the fresh cut stump liberally swabbed with the **MSF600** concentrated mixture as detailed in the 'Cut stem and inject' section.

