

# WANDERING JEW



## DESCRIPTION

Wandering Jew - (*Tradescantia fluminensis*). Also called Wandering Willie.

Originally from South America, it was imported into New Zealand as a popular ornamental groundcover and hanging basket plant. But careless disposals of home garden stock, combined with NZ's ideal growing conditions, have seen it become a serious and persistent pest in much of the country.

It has shiny oval leaves (3-6cm long) with very short stems. It flowers during Spring, producing clusters of small white flowers with three petals. It grows as a dense, green, succulent carpet up to 50cm thick and can quickly choke out a large area if left unchecked.

Wandering Jew prefers damp, shady locations such as stream banks, lowland forests and native bush, as well as sheltered spots on the margins of pastures and other farmland. It is also a particular problem in large gardens and reserves.

Wandering Jew does not normally seed in New Zealand, but instead grows easily (*very* easily) from the node fragments of the succulent stems. If Wandering Jew is pulled out and dumped, the discarded material is almost certain to take root and grow rapidly in the new location. It is therefore easily spread by mowers and other machinery, especially along roadways. In native bushland, broken fragments are washed downstream by floodwaters, and can thus re-establish over a large area.

## MANUAL REMOVAL

Manual removal of small areas of Wandering Jew is quite easy, in that the plant is not deeply-rooted and so comes away from the soil readily, especially in times of dry weather. The process can be assisted, and the back eased, by using a rake.

The problem is that even very small fragments can regrow. That means that every bit of the removed material has to be taken from the site, or reinfestation is nearly certain. It also means that disposal of the removed material must be thorough and thoughtful, or the problem will just be transferred somewhere else. The best disposal method is to bury all of the removed material deeply (30-50cm at least), to prevent regrowth. The waste vegetation can also be burnt, but being a wet, succulent plant it will need to be dried out before it will burn

successfully, and this obviously raises the question of finding a safe location from which the drying vegetation cannot 'escape'.

Do not attempt to mulch or compost any removed Wandering Jew material, because the stem nodes can survive the composting process as well as prolonged exposure to the sun, so once the contaminated compost is re-used, the Wandering Jew will probably appear at that new site.

## HERBICIDE CONTROL

### Spraying

Spraying is the preferred method of controlling larger infestations of Wandering Jew, beyond the size that can reasonably be hand-removed. There are three effective spraying options, each with advantages for certain situations:

- **Triclo** at 60ml + 10ml **SuperWetter** organosilicone penetrant per 10 litres of water. **This is the preferred option.** It's the most effective and gives a very fast brownout. However it is best when applied in the warmer months (say Oct-Mar).
- **Glyphosate** 360g/L at 200ml + 10ml **SuperWetter** organosilicone penetrant per 10 litres of water. (Note: If using **Granny**, then use 100g instead.)

This is the best option when you don't want any soil residues, and when you are spraying close to waterways (say 5 metres). Don't spray directly onto the waterway.

- **MSF600** at 5g + **Glyphosate** at 100ml + 10ml **SuperWetter** organosilicone penetrant per 10 litres of water. This is a more effective option than glyphosate alone, and results in less regrowth. Don't use this one very close to water as the MSF600 will damage aquatic plants even at low (i.e. overspray) concentrations.

**Combining the Triclo and Glyphosate recommendations into a single spray has also worked extremely well according to customer reports.**

In all cases, it will be likely necessary to do one or more repeat applications to eradicate any surviving/regrowing plants.

