



### ***Rubus fruticosus*** **BLACKBERRY**

SEPTEMBER 2008

There are about 15 different types of blackberry in Australia. A common weed, many people are familiar with its succulent black fruit and sharp spines.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Blackberry is a prickly perennial shrub. Its stems consist of erect arching or trailing canes growing up to 7 m long. They are soft and green at the tips changing to woody reddish to dark green in the mature sections and covered in prickles 3-5 mm long. The leaves are alternate with three to five toothed ovate leaflets, the upper side dark green and underneath lighter often with hairs. Blackberry has clusters of white to pink flowers 2-3 cm in diameter each with five petals. Flowers are seen November to February. The fruit is a berry 1-3 cm in diameter and consisting of numerous drupelets, each holding one seed. The seed is light to dark brown, triangular and deeply pitted. Berries appear in December to April changing from green to red to black as they ripen. A majority of the roots occur within 20 cm of the surface, but have been known to occur up to one metre deep. The roots have a well-defined woody crown at ground level.

#### **EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

Forming thick dense thickets, blackberry excludes all indigenous vegetation thus destroying native animal habitat and creating a favourable environment for feral animals such as rabbits and foxes. Dead plants and large patches can be a fire hazard.

#### **HABITAT**

Blackberry is best suited to humid and subhumid temperate regions with fertile soils and an average annual rainfall greater than 750 mm. It can tolerate full sun, shade, frost, drought and fire. In Sutherland Shire it is found in disturbed areas especially along creek lines. Whilst it prefers alluvial soils it will grow in sandstone areas.



Blackberry canes form tangled thickets.  
Source: Sutherland Shire Council



Ripe and unripe fruit.  
Photo. Coastcare

## ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Introduced from Europe for ornamental and fruiting uses, blackberry is first recorded in Australia in Adelaide during 1842. It is probable that this weed was present in Australia before this time. Initial spread was due to planting for use for food and also for hedging and it has since been used in bank stabilisation. Birds disperse the seeds by eating the fruit and spreading it over a wide area. Creeks and feral animals also provide a means of dispersal. Blackberry also spreads by suckering and when 'daughter plants' develop on canes. Blackberry is now found in all states of Australia except the Northern Territory.

## DECLARATION

Blackberry has been gazetted as a noxious weed in many areas of NSW including Sutherland Shire. The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 is an instrument serving the protection of our environment, general health of the community and agricultural production. Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 all noxious weeds must be controlled. The act applies to all landowners and occupiers. This weed has a control category of class 4. For class 4 noxious weeds: *"The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority"*. Failure to comply with the prescribed categories may result in a fine of 100 penalty units.

## CONTROL

For smaller plants, dig out and remove the entire crown and as much of the root system as possible. Small plants may also be cut close to the ground and painted with Glyphosate to prevent regrowth. Plants can be sprayed with herbicide following the recommendations and all safety directions as indicated on the label. Contact council's noxious weeds officers for information on the most suitable herbicides and time to spray.



Blackberry forms dense thickets.  
Photo K. Blood

For further information contact  
Bushcare or Greenweb Units  
on 02 9710 0333  
© Sutherland Shire Council.

Sutherland Shire  
COUNCIL

