



Cinnamomum camphora **CAMPHOR LAUREL**

SEPTEMBER 2008

Camphor Laurel grows to a ripe old age, forming a large spreading tree. Its thick foliage of dense, glossy leaves shade large areas of soil, suppressing the neighbouring native plants of sunlight.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree to 20 metres high. Leaves are alternate, oval in shape and glossy bright green on the upper surface, dull green below, up to 8 cm long. The dark grey trunk has rough bark and prominent vertical cracks; small branches are smooth olive green, twigs are often red. A pleasant distinctive camphor odour can be identified when leaves are crushed. It has tiny white to cream flowers in axillary panicles near ends of branches. It flowers in summer and fruits mature in April to June. Fruit is a globular glossy black berry 8 to 10 mm in diameter, a major food source for native Australian birds and dispersed by them in great quantities.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Camphor Laurel appears to produce a chemical inhibitor that prevents the growth of other plants, including its own seedlings, under its canopy line. Camphor Laurel trees cast heavy shade and has an extensive root system, so that they dominate their immediate area, excluding most other vegetation. It produces a large quantity of berries and flowers ensuring the widespread distribution of the plant throughout the native bushland.

HABITAT

Camphor Laurel invades along gullies, coastal rainforest, dunes and headlands. Camphor Laurel can tolerate most climate and soil conditions, however the plant prefers and grows abundantly in the above environments. Many large old trees occur in parks and gardens around Sydney and so will continue to be a source of seed dispersal to infest the natural bushland areas.



Leaves and fruit of Camphor Laurel.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

A native to China, Japan and Taiwan. Widely planted in parks and gardens and as street trees in older suburbs, is also grown for camphor and timber in other parts of the world. The Camphor Laurel invades bushland in Sydney and coastal NSW. The seeds are spread widely by birds, which has resulted in the spread across the central and north coast of NSW and QLD. It is regarded as a troublesome weed in the pastures on the far north coast of NSW.

DECLARATION

Camphor Laurel is considered an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. However, it is still important that environmental weeds be destroyed, as they can also affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

CONTROL

Seedlings are easily hand pulled. A number of chemical controls are available. Cut and Paint or inject herbicide for complete root kill into sapwood is recommended. Often re-shoots after poisoning or burning, so a follow-up of herbicide application is needed. Consult with council staff for information on the most effective herbicide treatments.



Camphor Laurels grow to be very large trees.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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Sutherland Shire
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