



Olea europaea subspecies *cuspidata* AFRICAN OLIVE

November 2009

The African Olive is a common escapee from gardens as it was readily used as an ornamental in homes and nurseries. A tall branching shrub or sometimes a small tree, it can form dense thickets.

DESCRIPTION

A small evergreen tree or tall spreading shrub 2 to 15 metres high with smooth grey bark. African Olive has wilting branchlets and dark green, glossy, elongated oval shaped leaves, 5 to 10 cm long with a curved tip. The leaves can also have small tooth-like features on the margins towards the tip. Younger leaves have tiny brown scales on the underside. White tubular flowers, with five petals, 0.6 to 0.8 cm in diameter and borne around late spring at the junction of the stem and leaves in small clusters.

Its succulent green berries (olives) ripen to red then black from late autumn to winter.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

African Olive produces fruit and flowers prolifically. This ensures that the dispersal is carried out over large distances, with the assistance of feeding birds and other animals. African Olive plants will grow in dense colonies, infesting and overpowering native bushland. The wilting branches of the plant shade native plants from sunlight and the plants themselves vigorously compete with native plants for water and nutrients in the surrounding area. The seeds also have the ability to germinate under heavy shade.

HABITAT

African Olive has become a major environmental weed, particularly on clay soils in Western Sydney and various other soils near the coast. It grows in most circumstances, full sun or heavy shade, moist or dry conditions and thrives in moist shady sites on riverbanks. Foxes and birds eat small black olives as a staple food.



Picture of African Olive showing young fruits.



Juvenile Olive plant.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

DECLARATION

African Olive has been gazetted as a noxious weed in Sutherland Shire Council area. 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 and the plant may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed”*. Failure to comply with the prescribed categories may result in a fine of 40 penalty units.

CONTROL

Complete removal of the root system is advised. Olives re-sprout prolifically if severed or burnt. Eradication of small plants can be achieved by digging out the whole plant. Alternatively larger plants can be scraped and painted with undiluted Glyphosate. Wait for plant to defoliate and remove above ground parts.



Mature stand of African Olive.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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COUNCIL

