

Rubus discolor

HIMALAYAN

ENGLISH NAMES	Himalayan blackberry, Himalaya-berry
SCIENTIFIC NAME	<i>Rubus discolor</i>
FAMILY	Rosaceae (Rose)
OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES	<i>R. armeniacus</i> , <i>Rubus procerus</i>



Photo Credit: ©JOHN M. RANDALL/
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Himalayan blackberry is a sprawling shrub that forms dense, impenetrable thickets in disturbed areas.

RANGE/KNOWN DISTRIBUTION

The Himalayan blackberry is native to western Europe, but has become naturalised in many parts of the world including eastern Europe, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and North America. It is widespread along the Pacific coast from California to south-western British Columbia, including all of the Garry oak range.

IMPACTS ON GARRY OAK AND ASSOCIATED ECOSYSTEMS

Himalayan blackberry can turn open, grass-dominated areas into shrub-dominated ecosystems, reducing habitat for native plants and animals. Its dense canopy blocks the light, eliminating the ground cover of native species and preventing the sprouting of young oak trees. Only established trees remain, with small trees succumbing to the dense thicket.

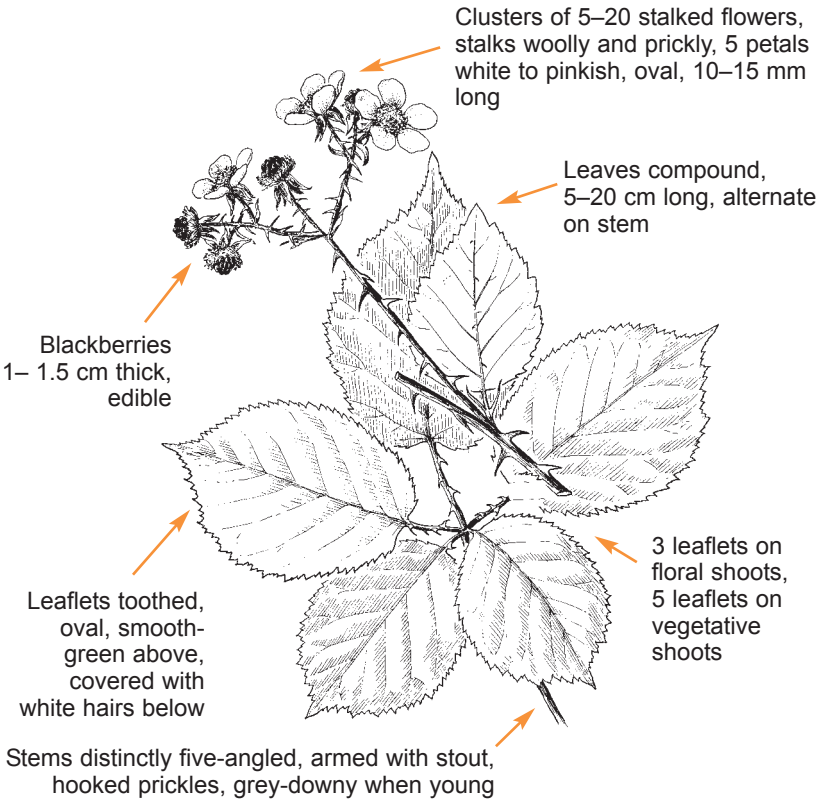
The thickets provide food and cover for introduced pests such as the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*) and rabbits, as well as some native animals. The presence of blackberry can also result in the trampling of native plants as humans seek out the juicy blackberries.

FIELD DESCRIPTION

Himalayan blackberry is a coarse shrub, with shoots 2–10 m long, often forming thick, impenetrable thickets. The stout stems are armed with hooked prickles. Flowers are pinkish-white with five petals. The fruit are red, turning a deep purple-black as they ripen. Its root crown is up to 20 cm in diameter, with many lateral roots at various angles.

The evergreen blackberry (*R. laciniatus*)—also an introduced species found in disturbed areas—has five leaflets that are deeply incised with jagged toothed margins and are greenish on the underside.

RUBUS DISCOLOR



The publisher thanks the University of Washington Press and the Province of British Columbia for permission to reprint illustrations from *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest* by C.L. Hitchcock et al.

LIFE HISTORY

Blackberry spreads rapidly using vegetative reproduction. In less than two years, a single cane cutting can produce a thicket 5 m in diameter. Young canes grow upwards and then arch over and trail on the ground, where the tips of first-year canes may take root. In their second year, canes produce flowers in spring. The fruit ripens over a long period of time from mid-summer to fall, after which the cane dies. A large quantity of litter and standing dead canes develops in old thickets, and as new canes re-enter into the main thicket it forms an impenetrable mass.

Himalayan blackberry produces abundant seeds (700–13,000 per square metre), although only about 10 percent of these germinate. The fruit are eaten and dispersed widely by birds and mammals, leaving seeds that remain viable in the soil for several years. Woodland habitat may be rapidly overrun by blackberry, as roosting birds will disperse hundreds of seeds.

HABITAT

Himalayan blackberry prefers moist locations with an average

Develop a long-term, realistic program for invasive species removal before undertaking any work. Before taking action, expert advice should be obtained. Please refer to the introductory section of this manual.

annual rainfall greater than 76 cm and elevations below 1,800 m. It will grow in both acid and alkaline soils, and inhabits streamside areas as well as fencerows, forest plantations and other disturbed sites.

MANAGEMENT

If allowed to dominate, Himalayan blackberry can eliminate most herbaceous species. The highest priority is to control blackberry before it takes over an area. Gloves are a necessity because of the prickles. Be careful to correctly distinguish non-native blackberries (*Rubus discolor* and *R. laciniatus*) from the native trailing blackberry (*R. ursinus*).

PHYSICAL CONTROL: Hand pulling and weed wrenches can be used to remove seedlings and young plants up to 1 m tall. This should be done before the blackberry seeds set, and is easier when the ground is moist. Remove as much of the root system as possible to minimise resprouting.

Older, established plants can be cut using machetes and brush cutters, and the roots removed by hand digging. Remove any sprouting roots in following years. If cut before seeds are produced, the debris may be piled and left as brush cover for birds and small mammals, or burned. Be careful to prevent rooting of the cut material.

Large established patches can be controlled by cutting new growth from late July to early October, to prevent the tips rooting and expanding the patch. (If cut too early in the year, new tips will grow.)

For more information contact the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, or see the website at www.goert.ca