

GROUNDSEL BUSH

Baccharis halimifolia



Photographs are courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie

Description & life cycle

Groundsel bush is mainly found in the coastal areas of South East Queensland and New South Wales. It is a Class 2 declared plant in Queensland and a Class 3 noxious weed in New South Wales.

Groundsel bush is a densely-branched shrub which normally grows up to 3m tall, but has been known to grow up to 7m tall. Its wedge-shaped leaves are alternately arranged with large teeth at the tips. Flowering occurs from mid to late March, with male and female flowers being produced on separate plants. The female flowers are white and fluffy, while the less conspicuous male flowers are pale yellow. During seeding, female plants are covered in seeds topped with tufts of white hairs giving them a snow-covered appearance.

Groundsel bush rapidly colonises disturbed areas, out-competing desirable species for water and nutrients and destroying habitat for native wildlife. Seeds are readily dispersed by wind and can also be spread via animals, running water, vehicles and machinery.

Key features

- > Rapid coloniser of cleared, unused land and moist areas such as freshwater or brackish wetlands
- > Each female plant can produce up to a million seeds
- > Seeds germinate readily with rainfall but if buried, can remain dormant for several years
- > Plants will re-sprout from underground buds if damaged

Control

1. Small plants (less than 1 metre) can be hand pulled.
2. Larger plants can be controlled with herbicides using either the foliar spray, cut stump, or basal bark method. Refer to product labels for rates and registration details.
3. Larger plants may also be controlled mechanically with a cutter bar 10cm below ground surface.
4. Six introduced insects provide some biological control of Groundsel bush. They are the stem borer *Megacyllene mellyi*, the plume moth *Oidaematophorus balanotes*, the gall-fly *Rhopalomyia californica*, the leaf beetle *Trirhabda baccharidis*, the leaf skeletoniser *Aristotelia ivae* and the leaf miner *Buccalatrix iveila*. More information on these can be found on the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries website (www.dpi.qld.gov.au).