



1. Habit of a plant in cultivation 2. Paired leaves with three main veins running lengthwise. 3. Bright pink flowers with numerous stamens 4. Paler and hairy leaf undersides.



Ceylon Hill Cherry (*Rhodomyrtus tomentosa*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Ceylon Hill Cherry (or Downy Rose Myrtle) is a member of the Myrtaceae plant family from the Indian Sub-continent, China and South-East Asia. It is occasionally cultivated in the sub-tropical and warmer temperate regions of Australia.

Distribution

This species has become naturalised in Florida, Hawaii and some other Pacific Islands (e.g. French Polynesia). It is regarded as a potentially serious weed, and is prohibited entry into several Australia states and territories.

A single plant was reported growing in disturbed bushland in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane in September 2013.

Description

Ceylon Hill Cherry is a shrub usually growing 1-2 m tall, but it occasionally reaches up to 3 m in height. Its younger stems are greyish in colour and covered in downy hairs. The leaves are arranged in pairs along the stems and are borne on short stalks 3-10 mm long. They are oval in shape (3-8 cm long and 1-4 cm wide) with entire margins and rounded tips. Their upper surfaces are mostly hairless when mature, with three main veins running lengthwise, while their undersides are densely covered in fine hairs.

The flowers are borne singly or in groups of three in the upper leaf forks. These flowers (2-4 cm across) have five bright pink petals that fade to pale pink as they age. They also have five small rounded sepals (4-7 mm long) at the base and numerous pink stamens (7-15 mm long) in the centre. The flower buds and flower stalks (up to 25 mm long) are densely covered in downy grey hairs. The fruit is an oblong or urn-shaped berry (10-20 mm long and 8-15 mm wide) that is crowned by the persistent sepals. It is covered in fine downy hairs, turns dark purple as it matures, and contains 40-45 seeds.

Quick Facts

- > A shrub growing up to 2 m tall with young stems covered in downy hairs.
- > Paired leaves with three main veins and densely hairy undersides.
- > Bright pink flowers (2-4 cm across) with five petals that fade as they age.
- > Small berries (up to 15 mm across) that turn dark purple when mature.

Habitat

This species is most commonly found growing along waterways, along coastal shores, in disturbed sandy sites, and the understorey of forests in other parts of the world. However, it has also been recorded on mountain slopes, in grasslands, in estuarine habitats, and in wetlands.





1. Older flowers with paler petals. 2. Mature fruit crowned with persistent sepals.

Reproduction and Dispersal

Ceylon Hill Cherry reproduces mainly by seed, but it will re-shoot prolifically if it is cut or burnt. Its fruit are readily consumed by birds, which are the primary dispersal agent, but the seeds can also be spread by mammals (e.g. rats) or in dumped garden waste.

Why is it an Emerging Threat?

This species is regarded as a serious invasive weed in Florida and Hawaii, where it is taking over the understory of native forests. It forms dense single-species thickets that displace the native flora and fauna, as well as altering the natural fire regimes in plant communities that it invades. Climate-modelling research suggests it also has the potential to become a significant weed in coastal Queensland.

Control Methods

Seedlings and younger plants can be removed by hand, while larger shrubs may require treatment with herbicide. Fruit should be bagged and disposed of properly so it is not dispersed by birds. Mechanical control of larger shrubs is not recommended, because plants will vigorously sucker from their roots.

No herbicides are specifically registered for the control of Ceylon Hill Cherry in Australia, but Vigilant Gel is registered for the control of woody weeds in native vegetation, conservation areas, gullies, reserves and parks (using the cut-stump method). Woody environmental weeds may also be controlled in Queensland with some herbicides as outlined in APVMA off-label Permit 11463 (see <http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). For example, some formulations of glyphosate and triclopyr + picloram can be used as a cut stump or basal bark application. Please read the off-label permit carefully for the exact products and rates to use and, unless otherwise stated in the permit, the use of any of these herbicides must be in accordance with the instructions on their labels. Within other state boundaries, it is recommended that any relevant permits or government legislation applicable to the region be consulted.

Look a-likes

Ceylon Hill Cherry is very similar in appearance to the Pineapple Guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*). However, the leaves of this commonly cultivated plant do not have three veins running lengthwise and its flowers only have four petals. The closely-related Native Guava (*Rhodomyrtus psidioides*) can be easily distinguished from Ceylon Hill Cherry by its white flowers.



Top. Close-up of flowers with four petals and red stamens.

Bottom. Pineapple guava plant with leaves that have a single main vein.

The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2013