Factsheet: European blackberry (Rubus fruiticosus aggragate)

Very High Risk Weed for Kangaroo Island

European blackberry is an Alert Weed for Kangaroo Island. Notify the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ki/contact-us). Early detection and control are the best way to prevent the next widespread weed.

It is a declared plant (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/223630/European_blackberry_policy.pdf) for South Australia

THE SITUATION AND WHAT TO DO

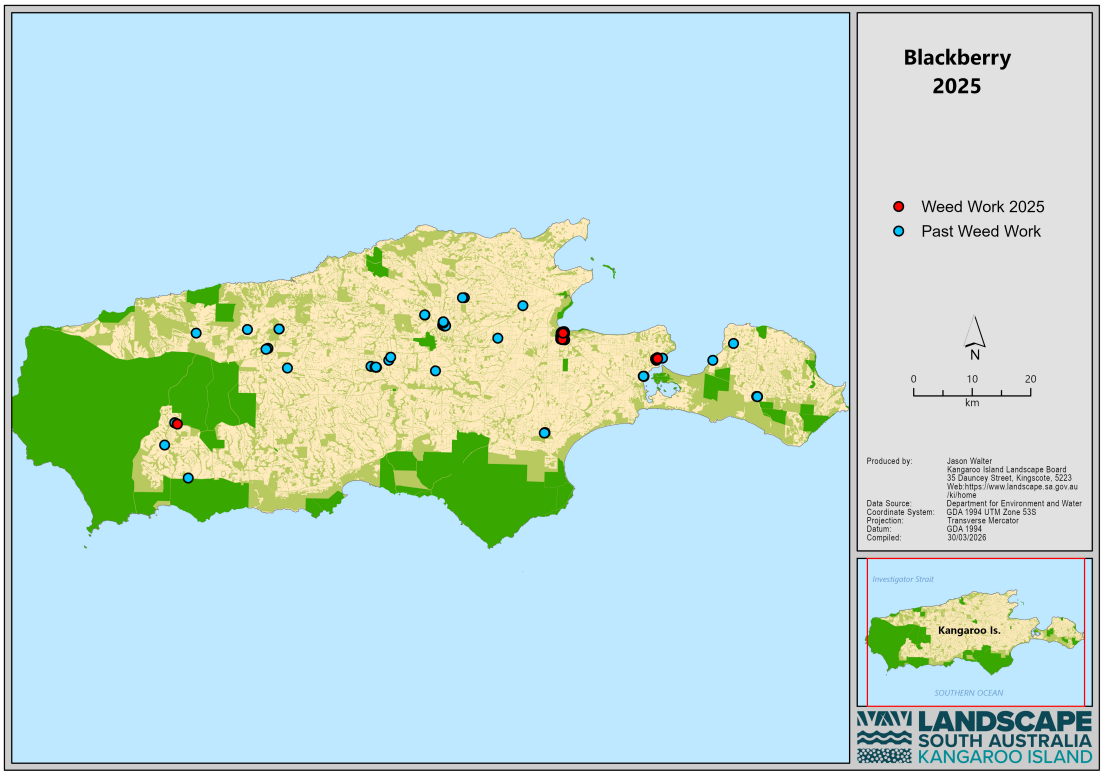
European blackberry is one of Australia's most widespread plants and is mainly spread by birds, animals and water. The name blackberry refers to a complex group of closely related species that reproduce by vegetative growth and seed. In South Australia *Rubus anglocandicans* and *R. ulmifolius* are the most common and widespread. Introduced in the 19th century for fruit production, blackberry was later naturalised in forested gullies, along creeks and roadsides in the wetter parts of the state.

European blackberry is a Weed of National Significance (https://weeds.org.au/lists/established/)and is a declared pest palnt in South Australia under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2FC%2FA%2FLANDSCAPE%20SOUTH%20AUSTRALIA%20

The Kangaroo Island Landscape Board has been controlling Blackberry for over 20 years and over 30 infestations have been found and controlled across the island. The management aims are to

destroy all known plants.

To help keep Kangaroo Island free of blackberry it is important to report any suspected plants to the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.



DESCRIPTION

- **Growth form:** a perennial, scrambling shrub with long arching canes covered in sharp prickles. Canes may grow up to about 7 m long and root where their tips contact the soil, forming dense thickets.
- **Leaves:** are usually composed of 3–5 leaflets. They are dark green on the upper surface and lighter or hairy beneath, with prickles along the veins and stems.
- **Flowers:** clusters of white or pale pink flowers (about 2–3 cm across) appear in late spring to summer on second-year canes.
- **Fruit:** berries develop after flowering, changing colour from green to red and then black when ripe.
- **Seed:** each berry may contain up to about 80 seeds, and large infestations can produce thousands of seeds per square metre. Seeds are spread mainly by birds, mammals and water and can persist in the soil for many years.

Native blackberry species also occur, including the native raspberry *Rubus parvifoliu* (https://flora.sa.gov.au/taxon/24608-rubus-parvifolius?tab=5)*s* once found on Kangaroo Island.

IMPACTS

European blackberry forms dense, thorny thickets that restrict access for people and livestock and reduce the productivity of grazing land and can be expensive to control. These infestations compete strongly with pasture and native plants for light, water and nutrients, and often replacing diverse native understory vegetation, reducing habitat quality for native species. Dense growth

along waterways can restrict access for management and harbour pest animals.

Control methods can be costly and various depending on the situation. It has been found to take many years and costly to remove blackberry from native vegetation.

CONTROL OPTIONS

Control methods include burning, slashing/mulching, grazing, grubbing, and chemical spraying.

Infestations in open paddocks can very quickly be destroyed by slashing/mulching or grubbing and then spraying the regrowth or spraying and then burning the dead canes.

Infestations in native vegetation are much more difficult to control, and spraying is quite often the only option.

Spraying is best undertaken during flowering and fruiting over summer and early autumn.

Permitted and on label herbicides and rates can be found on the PIRSA Weed Control Website (https://pir.sa.gov.au/crops-and-plants/weeds-and-plant-pests/declared-weeds/blackberry-european)

DECLARATIONS

European blackberry is declared under the following sections of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2FC%2FA%2FLANDSCAPE%20SOUTH%20AUSTRALIA%20
:

- **186(1) Prohibiting entry to area**
- **186(2) Prohibiting movement on public roads**
- **188(1) Prohibiting sale of the plant**
- **188(2) Prohibiting sale of contaminated goods**
- **192(2) Landowners to control the plant on their properties**
- **194 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves**

FURTHER INFORMATION

- **Declared Plant Policy pir.sa.gov.au** (https://weeds.org.au/profiles/blackberry-european/)
- **Early Intervention Handbook pir.sa.gov.au** (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/388369/early-intervention-for-new-and-emerging-weeds-south-australian-handbook.pdf)
- **Weeds Australia weeds.org.au** (https://weeds.org.au/profiles/blackberry-european/)

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA KANGAROO ISLAND

Generated from https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ki/land-and-farming/pest-management/controlling-weeds/european-blackberry-rubus-fruiticosus-aggragate on **17 September 2026**