

Himalayan Blackberry

Rubus armeniacus

Rose Family

Non-Designated Noxious Weed: Control Recommended

Identification Tips

- Stout, thick arching stems (canes) with large thorns
- Main canes up to 15 feet tall with trailing canes reaching up to 40 feet long
- Small white to pink flowers
- Edible black fruit
- Leaves are large, rounded to oblong, toothed and usually in groups of 5

Biology

- Perennial with one main woody root ball
- Begins flowering in spring with fruit ripening in midsummer to early August
- Reproduces vegetatively by root and stem fragments, rooting at cane tips and by seed
- Seeds can remain viable in the soil for several years

Impacts

- Outcompetes native understory vegetation and prevents the establishment of trees such as Pacific Madrone, Douglas Fir and Western White Pine
- Limits the movement of large animals with impenetrable thickets
- Increases flooding and erosion potential
- Can take over entire stream channels and banks

Distribution

- Found throughout King County including in pastures, riparian areas, vacant lands, open areas, tree farms and along roadsides and right-of-ways
- Prefers full sun and well-drained soils

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **206-477-WEED**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds



Himalayan blackberry produces edible fruit, but also a lot of headaches due to its highly invasive growth.



Himalayan blackberry thickets overtake native plants and trees.

What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement for controlling Himalayan blackberry, the King County Noxious Weed Control Board recognizes that this plant is invasive and has a damaging impact on the environment and resources of King County. The Board encourages and recommends control and containment of existing populations, especially for restoration projects or revegetation plans.

Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed throughout several growing seasons.

Manual: Effective on small infestations of less than 200 square feet. Hand pull the stems that are close to the ground and uproot the root ball. For larger, more mature stands, cut the canes with loppers or pruners and dig up the remaining root ball. Remove canes and other fragments from the site as to prevent vegetative reproduction.

Mechanical: Mowing, including the use of riding mowers and tractor-mounted mowers, can be very effective in controlling blackberries. Mulch the cuttings as much as possible. *Do not* mow sites that are wet or susceptible to compaction or erosion. If only one cutting is done per year, cut when the plant begins to flower. Make sure to return to the site the following year. If no follow-up is done, plant may re-sprout from the root crown at a greater density than before. Cultivation in agricultural areas can also be effective.

Chemical: Herbicides can be effective on blackberries, especially if combined with manual control and monitoring for surviving plants. **Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label.** Products containing glyphosate are most effective when applied in



Native Blackberry

Not all the blackberry bushes in King County are the non-native Himalayan species. There is also a native plant called trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*).

It is smaller, has three leaflets (see picture above) and grows along the ground. It can also be weedy but does not grow up and over other plants and is not as aggressive as Himalayan.



Michael Way, SFEI

Beware of thorns when controlling blackberry plants.

late summer or early fall when canes are actively growing and after berries have formed. Glyphosate is absorbed by the growing leaves (not woody stems). However, glyphosate is “non-selective” and will injure any foliage that it comes in contact with, so make sure not to drip on desirable plants. Selective broadleaf herbicides with the active ingredient of triclopyr, 2,4-D and metsulfuron work well for lawn areas as they won’t harm most grasses. When using this type of herbicide or one

with glyphosate, do not cut down the treated blackberry bushes until they have died completely. This can take two weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.