

Rubus alceifolius

Nomenclature:

Species: *Rubus alceifolius* Poir.

Synonyms:

Rubus fimbriifer Focke

Rubus alceaefolius Poir.

Common Names: giant bramble (Australia)

Bayer Code: RUBAC

Description: A coarse, vigorous scrambling shrub with a woody rootstock, covering other plants and forming thickets, which reproduces by seed and layering. Stems robust, thick primary canes to 5 m long, covered with a felt of dense brown hairs and scattered hooked prickles; erect at first then arching and scrambling over other plants; short secondary canes producing flowers develop in the leaf axils of primary canes in the second growth season. Leaves green above, velvety brown below due to a dense covering of reddish hairs; alternate, simple, to 12.5 cm across, deeply notched at the base, with 5 to 7 shallow but finely serrated lobes. Flowers white, 1.5 to 2 cm diameter, in clusters at ends of short secondary canes, subtended by brown finely divided bracts; calyx covered at the base with brown velvety hairs. Fruit a succulent aggregate "berry" of edible 1-seeded segments or drupelets, red when ripe. Seed black, small, sub-globular. It has a short woody rootstock giving rise to a sparsely branched main root with a number of fibrous laterals in the upper soil layers. It occurs in wet gullies, creek banks and the perimeter of rainforests in the humid tropics, occurring as a weed along roadsides and in newly sown or run-down pastures (Parsons and Cuthbertson, 1992).

Distribution: *Rubus alceifolius* is native to occurs in China, Taiwan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (GRIN, 2001). *Rubus alceifolius* is listed as a "principal" weed in Australia (Holm *et al.*, 1979). It is on the noxious weed list for Australia and has localized distribution in Queensland (Australia, 2000).



By G. Fowler, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Center for Plant Health Science and Technology

Biology and Ecology: *Rubus alceifolius* is on the noxious weed list for Australia and has localized distribution in Queensland (Australia, 2000). Risk assessment by the Australian method gave a score of 11 (PIER, 2001). It is also listed by IUCN among the top 100 invasive species (which includes 35 plant species) of the world (IUCN, 2000). It is normally found on road shoulders and the edges of rainforest, giant bramble readily invades developing pastures, particularly on newly cleared lands. Because of the rate of vegetative growth and its barbed canes, it forms impenetrable thickets which reduce pasture productivity and may limit access to water. Its fruit, though edible, has no commercial value (Parsons and Cuthbertson, 1992). In Réunion, it is one of the eight most threatening plant invaders to become established on the island and occurs not only on sites disturbed by man but also in primary forest with minimal disturbance (Macdonald *et al.*, 1991). It is spread by birds and animals eating the fruits. It also spreads by rooting at the tips of arching shoots. To control it involves heavy cultivations and/or repeated use of potent herbicides, including imazapyr or triclopyr. *Rubus alceifolius* is an extremely unpleasant weed species with potential for serious impact on natural vegetation in tropical and subtropical regions of the United States.

References:

- Australian Weeds Committee. Noxious Weed List for Australian States and Territories. Last accessed 2000, from <http://www.weeds.org.au/noxious.htm>.
- Holm, L. G., J. V. Pancho, J. P. Herberger, and D. L. Plunknett. 1979. A Geographical Atlas of World Weeds. John Wiley and Sons, New York. 391 pp.
- International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN]. Invasive Species Specialist Group. Last accessed 2000, from <http://www.issg.org/>.
- Macdonald, I. A. W., C. Thébaud, W. A. Strahm, and D. Strasberg. 1991. Effects of alien plant invasions on native vegetation remnants on Réunion (Mascarene Islands, Indian Ocean). *Environmental Conservation* 18:51–61.
- Parsons, W. T., and E. G. Cuthbertson. 1992. Noxious Weeds of Australia. Inkata Press, Melbourne.
- Queensland Department of Natural Resources. 1996. Giant Bramble *Rubus alceifolius*. DNR Facts Pest Series. 24 pp.
- U.S. Forest Service. Pacific Islands Ecosystems at Risk (PIER). Last accessed 2001, from <http://www.hear.org/pier>.
- USDA. Germplasm Information Network (GRIN). ARS National Genetic Resources Program. Last accessed 2001, from <http://www.ars-grin.gov/npgs/searchgrin.html>.
- Wiersema, J. H., and B. Leon. 1999. World Economic Plants: A Standard Reference. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL. 749 pp.