

Woolly nightshade

Solanum mauritianum

Detect this pest plant before it becomes a problem

Why it's a problem:

Woolly nightshade invades productive land and prevents the regeneration of native plant species.

- This plant is allelopathic (produces toxins that poison the soil), forming dense, often pure stands that outcompete most other species.
- This plant is poisonous, handling it can cause irritation and nausea. The leaves are covered in thousands of fine hairs, these can cause allergic reactions in some people.

Appearance:

- It is a fast-growing, kerosene-smelling shrub or small tree growing up to 10m tall
- All parts are covered in dusty hairs, and whitish, branching, soft woody stems.
- Velvety, oval, grey-green leaves (10-35cm x 3-15cm) are whitish underneath with prominent 'ears' (25mm) at base, which clasp the stem.
- Dense clusters of mauve to purple flowers (15-20mm diameter) with yellow anthers appear from January to December.
- Clusters of round berries (1cm diameter) that ripen from hard green to soft, dull yellow. These berries are full of many small seeds, which are spread by birds.

Location:

Heavily disturbed forest and light gaps, shrublands, coastal and estuarine margins, inshore islands, consolidated sand dunes, wetlands, some tussocklands, and well-drained low-frost areas.

Get more information:

- [Weedbusters](#) provides descriptions and images to help with pest identification.
- [Agpest](#) is an identification tool for pests, biology, impact and management for farmers and agricultural professionals.
- [iNaturalist](#) is a sharing tool that contributes to biodiversity science for avid nature observers.
- Manaaki Whenua – [Landcare Research](#) provides information on weeds and biocontrol
- [Ministry for Primary Industries](#) (MPI) for information on protecting New Zealand from biological risk.
- Practice [biosecurity hygiene](#) to stop the spreading of pests.

