



Currant bush

Blackberry, burrum bush or conkberry
Carissa ovata and *Carissa lanceolata*



Description

Currant bush *Carissa ovata* and *Carissa lanceolata* is a sprawling native shrub with thorny stems. Currant bush can reach 3 m high, but is usually 1–2 m, branching out to several metres in diameter, and often forming dense, low thickets.

The leaves are leathery, grow opposite one another on the stem, are 2–4 cm long and either narrow (*C. lanceolata*) or oval-shaped (*C. ovata*).

The flowers are small and white, tube-shaped with pointed lobes at the end, and highly scented. The flowers develop into oval-shaped berries, (5–9 mm long) which become soft and black when mature and contain 1–2 seeds.

Distribution and habitat

Currant bush is widespread throughout sub-coastal and semi-arid Queensland. It prefers well-drained soils and in normal conditions does not spread quickly. However, when ground cover is significantly reduced, as from drought, heavy grazing pressure or clearing, currant bush will then rapidly invade.

Problem

Currant bush reduces pasture production, which is particularly serious where currant bush covers an extensive area. Currant bush is drought tolerant and not grazed as much as the pasture species. This gives it an advantage in dry times or in over-grazed situations.

In some areas, currant bush is seen as a useful browse plant. It is palatable to stock and has a moderate nutritional value. It provides drought fodder and reduces soil erosion. The small thickets also offer good habitats for wild animals and birds.

Mechanical control

Mechanical control of currant bush is best achieved by cutter bars, blade ploughs, or combined pulling, seeding, and follow-up burning. These methods are expensive.

Bulldozing seems to encourage currant bush growth. It fails to kill the roots, and by clearing the ground cover, it creates conditions which favour the spread of the plant.

Fire will kill currant bush if the fire is hot enough. If practical, currant bush areas can be fenced off from stock until there is sufficient grass and other matter to carry a very hot fire.

Chemical control

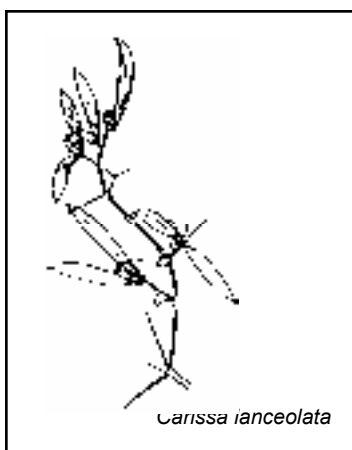
Chemical control may be used alone or as a follow-up to mechanical control (see table below).

Further information

Further information is available from the vegetation management/weed control/environmental staff at your local government. ■

TABLE 1 – HERBICIDES REGISTERED FOR THE CONTROL OF CURRANT BUSH

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments
Pastures	Graslan/Tebuthion	7.5 kg/ha or 1 g/m ²	Will kill native trees. Do not use near waterways



Fact sheets are available from NRW service centres and the NRW Information Centre phone (07 3237 1435). Check our web site <www.nrw.qld.gov.au> to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this Pest Fact 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, the Department of Natural Resources and Water does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.