Clematis vitalba

COMMON NAME
old man’s beard

FAMILY
Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY
Clematis vitalba L.

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
CLEVIT

HABITAT
Terrestrial. A plant of coastal and lowland areas. Plant grows in moderate to high fertile sites with medium to good drainage. The plant is light demanding. Plant grows in tall forest, low forest, scrub and shrubland. Occurs in reserves and forests with well-lit forest margins and wide tracks, waterways or clearings, riparian vegetation, exotic or native. The plant occurs in forest remnants.

FEATURES
Deciduous, climbing, layering, vine to 20 m tall. Stems very long, woody, with 6 prominent ribs (appear as furrows in older vines) and pale, easily rubbed-off bark. Leaves opposite, comprising 5 (rarely 3) widely spaced leaflets, falling in Autumn. Leaflets thin and papery, sparsely hairy, bluntly toothed or entire. Flowers 2-3 cm diam, creamy white, fragrant, Dec-May. Seeds grey, hairy, 2-3 mm long; with distinctive white-plumes, 3-4 cm long, in dense, fluffy clusters persisting over winter.

SIMILAR TAXA
Sometimes confused with native Clematis spp, especially C. paniculata. Note all native Clematis spp. are evergreen, have 3 leaflets (except the leafless C. afoliata), unfurrowed stems, and flower Aug-Dec. All exotic, wild species are deciduous and flower Dec-May (except the sparingly weedy, pink-flowered C. montana which flowers Oct- Dec). Other adventive species include C. flammula, which has 2-pinnate leaves, and the yellow flowered C. tangutica.

FLOWERING
December, January, February, March, April, May

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, White

FRUITING
March-Oct

YEAR NATURALISED
1940

ORIGIN
Europe, SW Asia
**REASON FOR INTRODUCTION**
Ornamental

**CONTROL TECHNIQUES**
Technique 1 Biological control agents may be suitable to control the weed, especially if it is common but this is unlikely to eradicate the species and other techniques below will be needed. Contact your regional council for more information about whether biological control is an option for you.

Technique 2 Slash thick stems (all year round) at 1 m and ground level. This is to prevent stump resprouting and aerial roots attaching from hanging stems. Paint all cut stumps with glyphosate (250ml/L) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g /L) or Tordon Brushkiller (100ml/L) or triclopyr 600 EC (100ml/L) or triclopyr 120g/L (500ml/L) or Banvine (200ml/L) or Yates Woody Weedkiller (400ml/L) or picloram gel. Cut stems can be left in the air to die and you can dispose of cutaway segments at a refuse transfer station or by burning.

Technique 3 Spray in spring-autumn with glyphosate (20ml/L) or clopyralid (12.5ml/L).

**TOLERANCES**
Requires light for growth and sexual reproduction. Frost tolerant and resprouts rapidly after physical damage and grazing. May prefer relatively fertile soils. Is generally limited by cooler temperatures of higher altitude areas, low annual rainfall, low soil fertility and shade.

**ETYMOLOGY**
clematis: From the Greek Klema ‘vine’, alluding to the vine-like habit of many species

**LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL**
Perennial. Seed germinates in spring with adequate light. Seeds require pre-chilling to stimulate germination (West 1991). The plant reproduces vegetatively by means of rooting of stem fragments and attached stem. Roots arise from stem internodes rather than nodes (West 1991). Vines that touch the ground can root. Produces prolific amounts of seed. Massive seed production, initially with a high viability rate that rapidly declines, some seed is retained in the soil for up to 5 years. An estimated 17,650 viable seeds are produced for every 0.5 m sq. plant in the canopy (West 1991).

Seeds are dispersed by gravity, wind and water, humans, birds (incorporated into nests, etc) believed to spread on footwear. Style hairs assist dispersal by helping fruit detach from parent plant and enable the fruit to lodge into cracks in the soil.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

**MORE INFORMATION**