

# Euonymus europaeus

## COMMON NAMES

spindle tree, spindleberry

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Much-branched glabrous, deciduous shrub or small tree up to 6m high. Bark grey & smooth. Twigs green, quadrangular, smooth, not winged. Leaves opposite, ovate-lanceolate to elliptic, acute or acuminate, crenate, usually turning red in autumn, 2–10cm long; petiole 6–12mm long. Cymes 2–15-flowered, pedunculate, dichotomous. Buds greenish, usually 4-angled; flowers usually 4-merous, 8–10mm diam.; petals greenish-yellow, generally oblong, widely separated. Capsule 4-lobed, deep pink, exposing the bright orange aril after opening. (- Webb et. al., 1988)

## HABITAT

Terrestrial.

## GENUS

Euonymus

## FAMILY

Celastraceae

## AUTHORITY

*Euonymus europaeus* L.

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November, December

## FRUITING

March to May

## YEAR NATURALISED

1958

## ORIGIN

Europe

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental



Lake Roxburgh. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Queenstown. Apr 2006. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Long-lived seed bank - more than a year (Carol West, pers. comm.). The species is gynodioecious (2 sexual morphs: 1 strictly female and the other, termed male, producing some seed) with both sexes established in wild populations (Webb et al., 1988). Birds (ibid.).

## POISONOUS PLANT

All parts of this tree are poisonous including the pink fruits with orange seed.

## ETYMOLOGY

**euonymus:** One possible explanation is this genus is named after Euonyme, the mother of the Furies (vengeance deities in Greek mythology) because of the irritating properties of this plant. Another explanation is that the name is simply from the Greek eu 'good' and onoma 'name', meaning 'a name of good repute'.

## ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

**This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC.** 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

## NVS CODE

EUOEUR

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/euonymus-europaeus/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026