

TACKLING Cherry Laurel

(*Prunus laurocerasus*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Cherry laurel is a fast-growing woody tree or shrub that is a commonly planted in gardens or as a hedge. It is native to southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe, and has escaped cultivation in many areas, including southwestern BC.

IMPACTS

Cherry laurel leaves, stems and seeds are toxic for humans and pets to ingest. In forests, cherry laurel competes with native plants by forming a dense cover that shades tree seedlings and shrubs. On residential properties, cherry laurel can quickly become a challenge to control, and fruit litter can be unsightly and spread seeds to natural areas.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Erect, spreading tree or shrub, up to 10 metres tall
- **Stems:** Twigs are green and smooth with a bitter almond odour when crushed, bark becomes woody and brown as the plant grows
- **Leaves:** Evergreen, thick, dark green and shiny on top, alternating on either side of the stem; oblong-shaped coming to an abrupt point at the end of the leaves
- **Flowers:** Small, white, fragrant flowers in upright clusters in spring



Bark

CREDIT: ISCMV



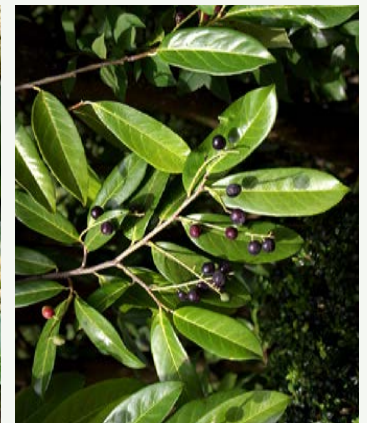
Leaf

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Flower stalks grow upright from branches

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Cherries (fruits)

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- **Seeds:** Small, purple-black cherries form in mid-summer; each cherry contains one pit (seed) that is poisonous to humans and pets, although they may be eaten by some birds and other animals

CONTROL METHODS

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, grow or propagate cherry laurel. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent yards, parks, and natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically includes a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling cherry laurel on private property or where permission has been granted by the landowner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals. **When handling cherry laurel, it is important to wear gloves and protective clothing. Hands should be washed thoroughly after activities, especially before eating.**

CONTROL METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Hand pulling	Seedlings or small plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove as much of the plant as possible, including the roots Easiest when soil is moist Can be completed throughout the year May disturb seeds in soil and encourage growth of new plants Return to the site periodically and remove new plants
	Cutting and continuous removal of new stems from stump	Mature plants and trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut stems and trunks as close to the ground as possible using a hand tool or chainsaw Cut or break any stems that grow from the cut surface regularly throughout the year May take several years before the plant dies

As cut cherry laurel branches and stems may produce roots and continue to grow, all plant parts should be moved offsite and disposed of appropriately. It is best to replant the area with native or non-invasive plants and cover the soil with mulch to reduce seedling growth.

How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade or grow cherry laurel. Non-invasive alternatives are available that can provide a continuous hedge or screen.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '**Report Invasives BC**' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Join a stewardship group and help remove invasive species from local parks.

For the complete set of best management practices for cherry laurel, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



Large, overgrown cherry laurel hedge

CREDIT: ISCMV