



## TACKLING

# Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*)

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

Himalayan blackberry was first introduced to BC as a berry crop. This plant can grow almost anywhere. It spreads by seed (from birds and people spreading berries) and by rooting from stems that touch the ground. As a result, it is one of the most widespread invasive plants in Metro Vancouver.

## IMPACTS

Dense thickets of Himalayan blackberry obstruct roads, walkways and signs. Its sharp thorns can cause scratches and cuts. It prevents the growth of other plants and is particularly damaging when it grows along the edges of rivers and streams, increasing flooding and erosion. This plant provides limited food and poor-quality habitat for pollinators and other wildlife compared to native plants.

## IDENTIFICATION

Himalayan blackberry can be easily confused with native trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) and invasive cut-leaf blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*).

- **Lifecycle:** Evergreen shrub that forms dense thickets
- **Stem:** Can grow up to 3 metres high and 10-12 metres long, and have sharp thorns
- **Leaves:** Grow alternately along the stem, in groups of five (in the first year) or three (in the second year)
- **Flowers:** Small, white to light pink, in groups of 5-20; bloom from April to August
- **Seeds:** Black, shiny, edible berries that ripen from mid-summer to fall



Leaves and stem with thorns

CREDIT: ISCMV



Berries

CREDIT: D. HANNA



Flowers

CREDIT: ISCMV



## PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, or grow Himalayan blackberry. 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 involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling Himalayan blackberry on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals. **Wear gloves, eye protection, long pants, long sleeves and sturdy footwear to avoid injuries from thorns when working around Himalayan blackberry.**

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	<b>Cut 30 centimetres above the ground</b>	Use at sites before you pull or dig to provide easy access to roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repeated cutting required</li></ul>
	<b>Dig or pull, removing all roots</b>	Young individual plants that are large enough to grip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Causes minimal harm to surrounding plants</li><li>• Repeated pulling required</li><li>• May disturb seeds in soil and encourage growth of new plants</li><li>• Works best after rain when the soil is soft</li><li>• Any roots left in the soil may re-sprout</li></ul>
Mechanical	<b>Mow and till the soil to remove exposed roots</b>	Areas accessible by a machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May harm surrounding plants</li><li>• Must be repeated multiple times each year</li></ul>

When possible, control Himalayan blackberry before the berries ripen. If birds nest at the site, control from September to mid-March (after the nesting season). Restore the area with native or non-invasive plants, and monitor for regrowth. Remove seedlings for several years until plants are no longer present.

## How Can You Help?

- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out [growgreenguide.ca](http://growgreenguide.ca) for suggestions.
- If you are collecting and eating the berries, be sure to remove any seeds or plant parts from clothing, pets, buckets, tools, etc.
- 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.



Volunteers removing Himalayan blackberry

For the complete set of best management practices for Himalayan blackberry, and other key invasive species, visit [MetroVancouver.org](http://MetroVancouver.org) and search 'Invasive Species'.