



Photo: Aaron Guffey, East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District



Photo: Samuel Leininger, Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District



## INVASIVE BLACKBERRY

(*Rubus bifrons* &  
*Rubus laciniatus*)

4-County CWMA Class C  
Oregon Class B  
Washington Class C



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### Overview

Invasive blackberry has taken over streambanks and natural areas in the Pacific Northwest. Many areas are now impassable to hikers and nature enthusiasts. These invasive species out-compete native vegetation and prevent the establishment of native trees and shrubs that require sun for germination.

### How to Identify

Invasive blackberries are non-native species that grow quickly and aggressively in the Pacific Northwest. The large **canes have five sides** and mature plants have **leaves in groups of five**. The white flowers bloom in summer and have five petals. **Thorns are hard, sharp, and often hooked**. Thickets grow to over 8 feet tall and brambles will overtop shrubs, trees, and narrow streams.

### Look-alikes

Trailing blackberry, *Rubus ursinus*, is a low growing blackberry native to the Pacific Northwest. It can be identified by its **weak, slightly bluish, round canes with 3 leaflets instead of 5**, and small, softer thorns.

### When to Remove

Manual/mechanical removal is best done **when the soil is moist prior to seed formation**. Removal can occur later in the growing season if proper follow-up maintenance is available. During late spring and summer months, it is crucial to **check blackberry thickets for bird nests** prior to removal. If you find a nest in a thicket, it's best to leave a 15 foot radius buffer around the nest and avoid using loud power tools.

### Other Control Methods

Use herbicide control methods only for large infestations where manual and mechanical removal becomes impractical. For any herbicide applications we urge you to work with a licensed herbicide applicator. To learn more, consult the best management practices provided by the 4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area ([www.4countycwma.org/AWeeds/Best-Management-Practices/](http://www.4countycwma.org/AWeeds/Best-Management-Practices/)). If any information provided contradicts the label, the label takes precedence. Always read and follow the label on any herbicide product you are using!

Please contact your local weed program in either Oregon ([www.Oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/CountyWeedPrograms.aspx](http://www.Oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/CountyWeedPrograms.aspx)) or Washington ([www.NWCB.wa.gov/Find-Your-County-Weed-Boards](http://www.NWCB.wa.gov/Find-Your-County-Weed-Boards)) for more information about how to control this invasive weed.



The mission of the 4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area, comprising Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington Counties, is to create and support collaborative weed management in the greater Portland area. For more details on our collaborative efforts in management, mapping, and outreach, please visit our website:

[www.4CountyCWMA.org](http://www.4CountyCWMA.org)





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## Manual Control Method

### **THIS METHOD SHOULD BE USED WHEN:**

- Invasion is near surface water
- Desired plants are in or around invasion
- Infestation is small
- Terrain is flat or gently sloped
- Soil is moist

### **TOOLS YOU NEED:**

- Sturdy gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants to protect from thorns
- Tarp
- Weed whackers, loppers, hand pruners, and/or machetes
- Shovel or claw mattock

1. **PREPARE** an area to pile the blackberry. Either find bare ground or clear an area of blackberry, including rootballs. Place two layers of cardboard (compostable) or a single tarp (removable/reusable) on top of the soil to prevent plant matter from rerooting. If neither of these options is available, build a thick mat of sticks and branches. Canes may also be chipped and composted.
2. **CUT** blackberry canes into 1-2 foot long pieces using weed whackers, loppers, hand pruners and/or machetes. If left in contact with soil, longer canes may grow roots and continue to thrive. Be sure to leave stumps long enough to relocate the root crowns.
3. **PILE** the bulk of blackberry canes off to one side of your site so you have clear access to the root crowns left in the ground.

4. **DIG** rootballs from the soil using shovels, or claw-mattocks. Remove as much root material as possible to decrease resprouts. Resprouts and small roots may be hand-pulled from moist soil. Throw rootballs on top of the pile of canes away from the soil or remove and compost them.
5. **PLANT** the area with native or non-invasive plants after the bulk of the blackberry is removed. This will repopulate the area with desired species and prevent new and recurring infestations.
6. **MONITOR** area for resprouts. Blackberry root fragments will continue to grow and produce new canes. After initial removal, the area needs to be managed at least twice a year to remove new growth. After 2-3 years of diligent removal, the area should be blackberry free. Be sure to monitor regularly for new infestations brought in by birds.

## Mowing Control Method

### **THIS METHOD SHOULD BE USED WHEN:**

- There is little or no slope
- The ground is dry and firm year-round
- No desired plants are in or around invasion

### **TOOLS YOU NEED:**

- Brush cutter
- Quality lawn mower

1. **CUT** blackberry on initial treatment. Use a brush cutter to mow canes close to the ground.
2. **MOW** blackberry at least 4 times each year during the growing season (March-November). Continued mowing over several years will starve the roots and kill the plants, but mowing must be consistent. If blackberry is left alone for a prolonged amount of time, thickets will grow too large to control by mowing.
3. **PLANT** and **MONITOR** as described in steps 5 and 6 of the Manual Control Method. It will likely take longer than 3 years to remove blackberry by mowing alone.



Photo: Nate Woodard, 4-County CWMA