

# Himalayan Blackberry

*Rubus bifrons* Rose Family

## Identification Tips

- Stout, thick, arching stems (canes) with large thorns
- Canes root at the tips and the nodes, forming daughter plants
- Main canes up to 15 feet tall; trailing canes up to 40 feet long
- White to pink flowers resemble wild rose
- Large, juicy, edible black fruit
- Leaves large, rounded to oblong, toothed, usually in groups of 5 except on new shoots
- Stems star-shaped in cross-section (not round like native blackberry)

## Biology

Robust, semi-evergreen, perennial shrubs with multiple stems growing from large, woody root crowns that can be up to 18 inches deep. Roots can be up to 3 feet deep. Reproduces via root and stem fragments, seed, and rooting at cane tips. Begins flowering in spring. Fruit ripens midsummer to early August. Seeds can remain viable in soil for several years. Up to 13,000 seeds per square yard. Canes can extend 20 feet in a single season.

## Impacts

Vigorous growth outcompetes most other vegetation. Reduces overall plant and animal diversity when it takes over. Prevents establishment of native trees and shrubs. Impenetrable thickets limit movement of large animals. Can take over entire stream channels and banks. Interferes with riparian restoration projects.

## Distribution

Found throughout King County, including in pastures, riparian areas, vacant lands, open spaces, tree farms, and along roadsides and right-of-ways. Prefers full sun and moist but well-drained soils. European plant that was originally introduced in the late 1800s as a crop.

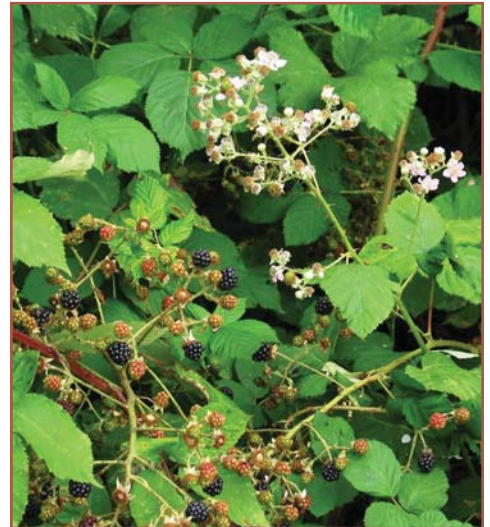
## What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement to control Himalayan blackberry, the King County Noxious Weed Control Board recognizes that this plant is invasive, damaging King County's environment and resources, and encourages control and containment, especially in coordination with restoration projects or revegetation plans.

## Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed throughout several growing seasons. Minimize impacts to wildlife, native plants, and pollinators by timing activities carefully and replacing

**Non-Regulated Class C  
Noxious Weed: Control  
Recommended**



*Originally from Europe, this large perennial shrub with edible black fruit is now found throughout King County.*



*Large, toothed, rounded to oblong leaves usually grow in groups of 5.*



*Star-shaped, thorny, arching stems grow 15 feet tall and 40 feet long.*

## Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program: **206-477-WEED** [kingcounty.gov/weeds](http://kingcounty.gov/weeds)

blackberry with beneficial plants. Cover bare soil with mulch, erosion control fabric, or other material, especially near water.

**Manual:**

Effective on small infestations (less than 200 square feet). Uproot small plants by loosening soil around roots and pulling by hand, or remove with stout digging tools like mattocks. For larger, more mature stands, cut canes with loppers or pruners and dig up the remaining rootball. Small cane fragments can be left in place as mulch; larger cane sections can be piled up to compost on site or burned if allowed in your area. Root balls may regrow and should be discarded with yard waste.

**Mechanical:**

Mowing, including the use of riding mowers and tractor-mounted mowers, can be very effective in controlling blackberries. However, do not use mowers or tractors on sites that are wet or susceptible to compaction or erosion. Instead use loppers, or a hand-held brush cutter or hedge trimmer. Cut 5 times per year for best results. If cutting only once per year, most effective when the plant begins to flower. Make sure to return the following year; without follow-up, the plant may regrow at a greater density than before. In agricultural areas cultivation can also be effective.

**Chemical:**

**Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Follow all laws and regulations regarding herbicide use in your location.** Herbicides can be effective on blackberry plants, especially if combined with manual control and monitoring for surviving plants. To reduce amount of herbicide used, can cut in mid-season followed by spraying when plants have regrown to at least 1½–2 feet tall. Products containing glyphosate are most effective if applied in early fall, when canes are actively moving sugars down to the roots. Glyphosate is absorbed by the growing leaves (and green stems). However, glyphosate will injure any foliage it touches, so make sure not to drip it on any desirable plants. Selective broadleaf herbicides with triclopyr or metsulfuron as their active ingredient work well for grassy areas because they won't harm most grasses. Follow label directions on best timing for these products on blackberry.

After spraying, wait at least one week before cutting down treated blackberry bushes. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial, and government agency users. For more information, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.



*If cutting blackberry once per year, the best time is when the plant is in flower.*



*Himalayan blackberry thickets overtake native plants and trees.*

**Could be confused with:**

**Evergreen blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*)—an invasive—and trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*)—a native—also grow in King County**

Evergreen blackberry is another common invasive blackberry species. It can be identified by its palmately compound leaves with 3-5 deeply lacerated leaflets. Native trailing blackberry is smaller, has 3 leaflets, and grows along the ground. It can also be weedy, but does not grow up and over other plants and is not as aggressive as the two invasive blackberry species.



*Invasive evergreen blackberry has palmately compound leaves with 3-5 deeply lacerated leaflets.*



*Native trailing blackberry is smaller with 3 leaflets and grows along the ground.*