



FACT SHEET

BLACKBERRIES

Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) and evergreen blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*)

- Himalayan blackberry stems (canes) can grow to 9 feet in height but often trail along the ground, growing 20-40 feet long.
- Thorns grow along the stems as well as on the leaves and leaf stalks.
- Himalayan blackberries have five distinct leaflets; each leaflet has a toothed margin and is generally oval in shape.
- Canes start producing berries in their second year.
- Himalayan blackberry can be evergreen, depending on the site.
- Rose family.



Himalayan blackberry



Himalayan blackberry



Evergreen blackberry

The leaflets of evergreen blackberry are deeply lobed, making it easy to distinguish from Himalayan blackberry.

DISTRIBUTION:

Himalayan blackberry is extremely visible in most of Jefferson County, growing along roadsides, over fences and other vegetation, and invading many open areas. **Evergreen blackberry** is more common in the West end of the county, where it has been seen to invade riparian areas.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Both Himalayan and evergreen blackberries form impenetrable thickets, consisting of both dead and live canes. These thickets out-compete native vegetation and are a good source of food and shelter for rats.

Both Himalayan and evergreen blackberries are Class C Weeds

ECOLOGY:

- Seeds can be spread by birds, humans and other mammals.
- The canes often cascade outwards, forming mounds, and can root at the tip when they hit the ground, expanding the infestation
- Individual canes may live only 2 to 3 years, with new stalks sprouting from the root crown.
- New plants will readily grow from pieces of root or cane and the roots can form suckers, giving rise to new plants.

CONTROL

Because blackberries are very hard to control once established, prevention and early detection and removal are strongly advised.

- **Avoid** introducing contaminated soil.
- **Remove** seedlings when young; newly established plants can usually be pulled without leaving root fragments in the ground.
- **Replant** newly weeded areas with desirable (preferably native) plant species that will discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly. Any part of the plant can resprout, so bury, burn or spray with herbicide.
- **Monitor** site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

HANDPULLING or **DIGGING** can be effective if care is taken to remove the all of the roots

MOWING or **WEED-WHACKING** are not effective control measures, because the extensive root system stores food reserves and sends up new shoots after mowing.

HERBICIDES can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying a herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended. These are most effective on young, actively growing plants because the herbicide moves around the plant more quickly. Also, herbicide is more easily absorbed by clean, new leaves that have not developed the thickened cuticle (waxy coating) present on mature leaves, which resists herbicide penetration.

- **Cut-stump treatment** (cutting the plant down to a few inches above ground and immediately painting the cut stump surface with undiluted herbicide) is a very effective way to control blackberries. Check the label first—make sure that this method is listed.
- **Note:** Most herbicides will **NOT** prevent germination of weed seeds already in the soil, so monitoring and retreatment are necessary.

Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice.

Trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) is a low-growing, trailing or climbing shrub, often found in wooded areas. It is a native plant, much less robust than the two introduced species, with much thinner stems. The leaves are composed of three leaflets. It can be a nuisance to landowners but is not as aggressive as the introduced species and is not a threat to other native plants.

