

Old Man's Beard

(*Clematis vitalba*)

Old Man's Beard (OMB) is an introduced clematis. It is a serious pest plant around Upper Hutt and the problem is rapidly becoming worse. We can turn the tide, but our Upper Hutt forests need your help. Is OMB on your property?



Why is OMB such a problem? Seeds are long-lived and are spread by water and wind. Left uncontrolled, OMB grows rapidly, smothering and killing the native trees and shrubs that our wildlife need to survive. Once a tree is killed and collapses, the vine climbs up the surrounding trees, spreading out in all directions, potentially killing large areas of forest.



OMB is a deciduous vine that can climb to 20m high. Creamy white, fragrant flowers, 2–3 cm in diameter, appear from December–May.



Above: OMB in flower (Summer). Right circle: OMB at the end of flowering, about to seed.



Seeds are grey and hairy with distinctive white plumes 3–4 cm long in dense fluffy clusters that persist over Winter.



Above: OMB in seed (Winter). Right circle: OMB seeds.



Stems are long and woody with deeply-grooved, pale, easily-peeled bark. On a young plant the vines may be thin. An older plant may have a stem as thick as your wrist. The distinctive stems are easy to identify below the canopy.



The leaves consist of five widely-spaced, thin, papery leaflets with serrated edges. OMB grows rapidly, forming a dense, heavy mass that dominates and eventually kills trees and forest.

Control of OMB is simple. Just cut and paste.

- **Cut stems both at 1m above ground and at ground level.** Make the ground-level cuts as horizontal and close to the ground as possible.
- **Paste all cut stumps with weed killer.** Use Picloram gel in a brush-top bottle: eg Vigilant (Mitre10) or Triumph Gel (UH Produce), Weed Weapon Invade Gel (Mitre10). You can also use Metsulfuron (eg Escort) at 5 g/L, Tordon brush killer at 10%, or Banvine at 20%. This can be done all year round.
- **For ground infestations, spray** with glyphosphate (eg Roundup) at 2%, or metsulfuron, Tordon brush killer or Versatill at label rates. Best done in Spring prior to OMB flowering.
- **Dispose of cut OMB vines** by hanging them in a nearby tree or on a fence so they do not touch the ground, by burning, or by disposing at a landfill.
- **Seedlings** can be pulled out all year round.
- **Re-check the site regularly.** Re-apply weedkiller if re-growth occurs from stumps.



Above: OMB trimmed to ground level and pasted with red Picloram.

Never cut OMB without also applying weedkiller.

Never leave cut stems on the ground. They will re-grow.

The **Upper Hutt Busters of Old Man's Beard** (UH BOMB) is working to reduce OMB in parts of Upper Hutt. This project is supported by DoC, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Upper Hutt City Council. For five years we have been working on the escarpment above River Road and we also work in the bush below Riverstone Terraces and behind Totara Park.

Want to join us in freeing our forests? Want help or advice? Email uhbusters@gmail.com