

GIANT GUNNERA

Gunnera tinctoria and *Gunnera manicata*

Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment	Sustained control	Site-led
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Impacts

Economic	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	Animal welfare

Objectives

Reduce the amount of giant gunnera and limit the locations that have it within the Waikato region.

Why is it a pest?

Giant gunnera has now moved from the garden into the wild. It grows into large plants with very big leaves, forming dense patches that can shade out and suppress native vegetation and exclude virtually all other plants.

Both species produce an abundance of viable seed (approximately 250,000 seeds in a year), which are bird dispersed. They can also spread by rapid rhizome growth, making them difficult to control. Giant gunnera threatens the integrity of indigenous communities, alters the habitats of birds, insects and lizards, can block drains and streams, obstruct access to natural and recreational areas, and contribute to erosion on slip-prone banks.

In the Taranaki region, giant gunnera has aggressively invaded a number of areas, including bluffs, wet cliffs and along several waterways. In the Waikato, giant gunnera is beginning to exhibit the same pattern of spread and establishment. Acting now to control and it will help us to avoid similar spread and impacts in our region.

Responsibility for control

Waikato Regional Council is responsible for the control of giant gunnera within the Waikato region. If you think you've seen it, call us. Do not attempt to control giant gunnera yourself.

- All occupiers are encouraged to report sightings of giant gunnera (rule GUN-1 of the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032*) and to liaise with Waikato Regional Council in areas where control programmes are in place.

Developers

- If giant gunnera is present on a property that is to be subdivided or developed, there are additional rules and requirements that apply under section 6.6 of the *RPMP 2022-2032*.

Giant gunnera (both species) is banned from being sold, propagated, distributed, or included in commercial displays.

What does it look like?

Both species are very similar although *Gunnera manicata* grows taller, to 3m high, while *Gunnera tinctoria* usually reaches 2m in height. *Gunnera tinctoria* has spread from cultivation into natural areas, while *G. manicata* produces seedlings less frequently in the wild.



Flower

- Cone-shaped flower spikes produced in summer, growing up to 1m tall.
- Each spike is covered with tiny red-green flowers.
- Flowers from spring to early summer.



Fruit/seed

- Produces abundant tiny round fruit (orange in *G. tinctoria*, orange-red in *G. manicata*).
- Fruit are eaten and spread by birds.
- Each spike can produce up to 80,000 seeds.



Leaves/stems

- The large leaves have 5-9 lobes and are hairy beneath, especially along the leaf veins.
- G. tinctoria* leaves are up to 1m across while *G. manicata* leaves can be up to 2m across.
- Leaves and stems are covered in rubbery prickles.





Similar plant

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) looks similar to (but should not be confused with) giant gunnera. Giant hogweed's leaves are more deeply lobed. It has tall flower stalks with large umbrella-like clusters of greenish-white flowers.



Gunnera manicata in Scotland. Photo: Robyn Ogle, NZPCN

More information

Advice

For additional information and advice on giant gunnera, call our pest plant staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

Publications

The following publications are available from the Waikato Regional Council. Contact us to request a copy (freephone 0800 800 401).

- National Pest Plant Accord (manual of plants banned from sale, propagation and distribution) (free)
- Plant Me Instead! (Plants to use in place of pest plants) (free)

Web

- Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032 – waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP
- Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032 – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy