

Clematis vitalba

COMMON NAME

old man's beard

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Clematis vitalba L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

CLEVIT

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of coastal and lowland areas. Plant grows in moderate to high fertile sites with medium to good drainage. The plant is light demanding. Plant grows in tall forest, low forest, scrub and shrubland. Occurs in reserves and forests with well-lit forest margins and wide tracks, waterways or clearings, riparian vegetation, exotic or native. The plant occurs in forest remnants.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Deciduous, climbing, layering, vine to 20 m tall. Stems very long, woody, with 6 prominent ribs (appear as furrows in older vines) and pale, easily rubbed-off bark. Leaves opposite, comprising 5 (rarely 3) widely spaced leaflets, falling in Autumn. Leaflets thin and papery, sparsely hairy, bluntly toothed or entire. Flowers 2-3 cm diam, creamy white, fragrant, Dec-May. Seeds grey, hairy, 2-3 mm long; with distinctive white-plumes, 3-4 cm long, in dense, fluffy clusters persisting over winter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Sometimes confused with native *Clematis* spp, especially *C. paniculata*. Note all native *Clematis* spp. are evergreen, have 3 leaflets (except the leafless *C. afoliata*), unfurrowed stems, and flower Aug-Dec. All exotic, wild species are deciduous and flower Dec-May (except the sparingly weedy, pink-flowered *C. montana* which flowers Oct- Dec). Other adventive species include *C. flammula*, which has 2-pinnate leaves, and the yellow flowered *C. tangutica*.

FLOWERING

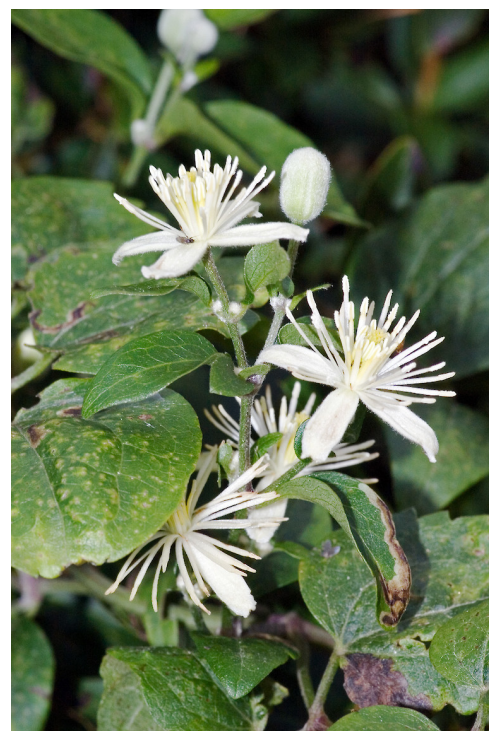
December, January, February, March, April, May

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White



Silverstream, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/06/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Mangaroa Valley, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 13/05/2006, Licence: CC BY.

FRUITING

March-Oct

YEAR NATURALISED

1940

ORIGIN

Europe, SW Asia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Technique 1 Biological control agents may be suitable to control the weed, especially if it is common but this is unlikely to eradicate the species and other techniques below will be needed. Contact your regional council for more information about whether biological control is an option for you.

Technique 2 Slash thick stems (all year round) at 1 m and ground level. This is to prevent stump resprouting and aerial roots attaching from hanging stems. Paint all cut stumps with glyphosate (250ml/L) or metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g /L) or Tordon Brushkiller (100ml/L) or triclopyr 600 EC (100ml/L) or triclopyr 120g/L (500ml/L) or Banvine (200ml/L) or Yates Woody Weedkiller (400ml/L) or picloram gel. Cut stems can be left in the air to die and you can dispose of cutaway segments at a refuse transfer station or by burning.

Technique 3 Spray in spring-autumn with glyphosate (20ml/L) or clopyralid (12.5ml/L).

TOLERANCES

Requires light for growth and sexual reproduction. Frost tolerant and resprouts rapidly after physical damage and grazing. May prefer relatively fertile soils. Is generally limited by cooler temperatures of higher elevation areas, low annual rainfall, low soil fertility and shade.

ETYMOLOGY

clematis: From the Greek klema 'vine', alluding to the vine-like habit of many species

vitalba: From the Latin vitis 'vine' and album 'white'

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Seed germinates in spring with adequate light. Seeds require pre-chilling to stimulate germination (West 1991). The plant reproduces vegetatively by means of rooting of stem fragments and attached stem. Roots arise from stem internodes rather than nodes (West 1991). Vines that touch the ground can root. Produces prolific amounts of seed. Massive seed production, initially with a high viability rate that rapidly declines, some seed is retained in the soil for up to 5 years. An estimated 17,650 viable seeds are produced for every 0.5 m sq. plant in the canopy (West 1991).

Seeds are dispersed by gravity, wind and water, humans, birds (incorporated into nests, etc) believed to spread on footwear. Style hairs assist dispersal by helping fruit detach from parent plant and enable the fruit to lodge into cracks in the soil.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

West, C. 1991. Literature Review of the Biology of Clematis Vitalba (old Man's Beard). Issue 725 of DSIR Land Resources vegetation report, Christchurch

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/clematis-vitalba/>