Invasive Blackberries *Rubus armeniacus & Rubus laciniatus*

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4a

Figure 4b

Scan or Click for more management information

Quick Facts: Invasive blackberries (*Rubus* spp.) are thorny perennial shrubs that occur across a wide range of habitats, including riparian areas, forest edges, pastures, and disturbed sites such as roadsides.

Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus)*, native to southwest Asia, and cutleaf blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*), native to Eurasia, are two of the most widespread invasive blackberry species and require similar management approaches.

Both species form dense thickets that are difficult to control, and can reduce plant diversity and restrict passage. Heavy infestations can overtop other vegetation, with the weight of dense canes sometimes damaging or pulling down trees and shrubs. Invasive blackberries may also harbor pests, including the spotted wing fruit fly (*Drosophila suzukii*).

Invasion Strategy: Invasive blackberries propagate through both seed and vegetative reproduction. Spread is driven primarily by long, arching canes that root at the tips, allowing plants to form dense thickets. Plants can also resprout from root crowns, rhizomes, and from root and stem fragments that may be dispersed by equipment, animals, or soil movement. Seeds may also be dispersed by wildlife that consume blackberries and can remain viable in the soil for several years.

Identifying Features: Both Himalayan and cutleaf blackberries share the following features:

- Tall, arching canes
- Edible berries that are red to black (Figure 4a)
- Five-petaled white or pink flowers (Figure 4b)
- Thorny, ridged stems with five angles
- Evergreen or semi-evergreen leaves

Leaf shape differs between the two species:

- Himalayan blackberry: rounded leaves with toothed edges, leaflets usually in groups of five (Figure 2)
- Cutleaf blackberry: deeply lobed leaves, leaflets in groups of three to five (Figure 3)

Invasive Blackberries *Rubus armeniacus & Rubus laciniatus*

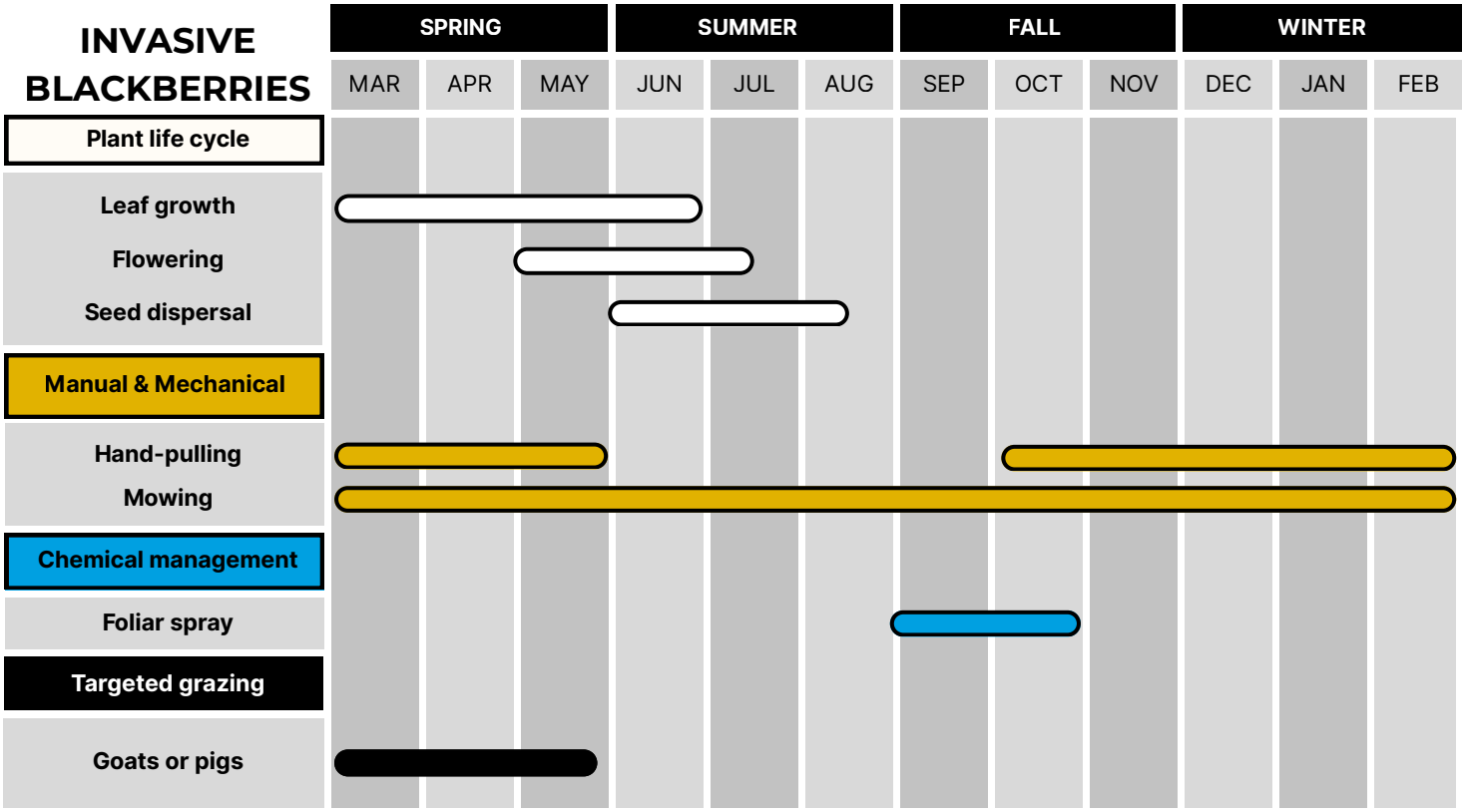


Table 1. This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 7. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

Management Methods:

Manual - Cutting aboveground shoots or digging up root balls can be effective for small infestations.

Mechanical - Consistent mowing for several years can exhaust root reserves and effectively control larger infestations.

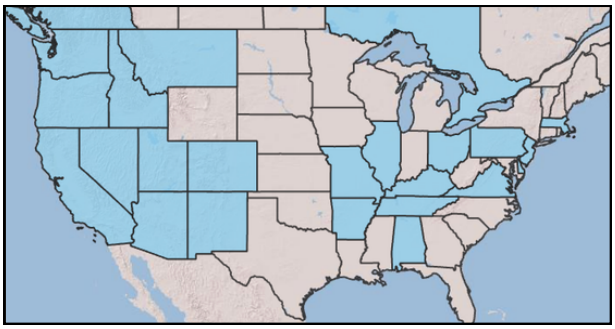
Chemical - Foliar sprays can be used to control invasive blackberries. Applications are most effective when done in early fall to maximize transport to roots.

Targeted grazing - Goats and pigs can mitigate early regrowth of immature stands, but they are unlikely to browse on more dense, mature stands.

Disclaimer - Selecting the best management method for this plant can be site- and context-specific. Check with your local USDA Service Center or University Extension agent to explore your options and determine what is most appropriate for your location and situation.

Management Information:

Dispose of cut plant materials where they cannot resprout. If seeds are present, bag them and dispose of them in a landfill. Equipment should be cleaned after management. Personal protective equipment is recommended when removing any invasive species, and especially when using herbicides. Always follow label instructions when using herbicide!



Himalayan blackberry: Present Absent

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Invasive Blackberries *Rubus armeniacus & Rubus laciniatus*

Look-alike species: Invasive blackberries can be confused with other blackberry species, including native species such as trailing blackberry.

Trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) is a blackberry species native to North America that may be confused with invasive blackberries. Distinguishing features of trailing blackberry include:

- Leaflets in groups of three (Figure 5)
- Growth is along the ground, and less aggressive than invasive blackberry species
- Stems that are round in cross-section, and often have a blueish hue
- Thorns are more delicate than invasive blackberries (Figure 6)

Figure 5

Figure 6

References and Additional Reading:

- Oregon Flora Project *Rubus armeniacus*, *Rubus laciniatus* [Identification, geographic range]
- Oregon State University Solve Pest Problems guide Himalayan blackberry [Identification, best management practices]
- Pacific Northwest Pest Management Handbooks Blackberry vines, wild [Chemical management]
- USDA NRCS Plant Guide: Himalayan blackberry, [History and management]

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- Figure 5: iNaturalist, epaciotta
- Figure 6: iNaturalist, chloe-roses
- Range map: USDA PLANTS Database

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