



# Old man's beard

## Why is it a pest?

Old man's beard is considered to be one of the most damaging climbing plants introduced to Aotearoa New Zealand because it smothers the plants and trees it grows on.

This makes it a threat to Otago's biodiversity. It spreads easily, and stems on the ground can take root and produce new plants. It can produce 1000 seeds per square metre, which stay in the soil or are spread by wind, water and birds. It also grows quickly; a stem can produce up to 10 metres of new growth in a season. Old man's beard is found across Otago.



## What does it look like?

- **Size:** This climbing, layering vine can attach to host plants to form vines up to 20 metres tall.
- **Leaves:** Arranged in opposite pairs on the stem with five leaflets per stem. The young vines have ribs running up and down the vine, and mature vines have stringy, pale brown bark. Old vines are woody and stringy, often grey in colour and can be 6-7 centimetres thick.
- **Flowers:** Creamy white flowers are followed by grey, hairy seeds with distinctive white plumes.
- **Root system:** Fibrous with a network of thin, branching roots.
- **Similar species:** Old man's beard can be distinguished from native *Clematis* as it has five leaflets per stem, whereas most native *Clematis* only have three leaflets per stem.
- **Habitat:** It grows in a variety of environments, including gardens, hedges, roadsides and riverbanks, native bush, commercial forest and shelter belts. It thrives in the shade and is frost tolerant.

### Common name:

Old man's beard

### Scientific name:

*Clematis vitalba*

### Management programme:

Progressive containment

The progressive containment programme aims to stop a pest from spreading and/or contain it to a certain area.

### Leaves

Stems have five leaflets.

Note: native species usually have three leaflets.

The vine is deciduous (loses leaves each winter).



## When can I spot it best?

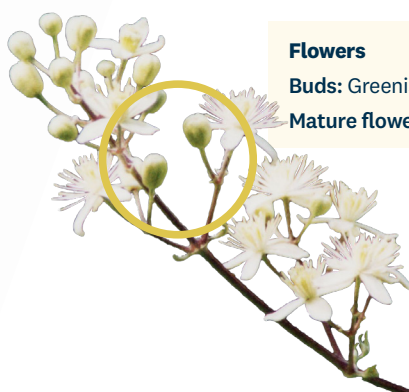
### Old man's beard changes throughout the year

Old man's beard flowers from December to April. The fluffy, beard-like seed heads are visible from April to August.

### Flowers

Buds: Greenish-white colour.

Mature flowers: Pale yellow.



## What are the rules?

To reduce the spread of old man's beard in Otago and minimise or prevent negative effects on economic wellbeing and the environment, old man's beard is in the progressive containment programme of the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan (2019-2029).

Everyone in Otago must **eliminate old man's beard** on the land they occupy. This is to ensure infestation levels are

reduced and threats to environmental values and biodiversity are minimised.

There is also a good neighbour rule for old man's beard, which states that if your neighbour is controlling old man's beard within 20 m of your shared boundary, then you need to be a good neighbour and do the same so efforts are not fruitless.

### Vines

**Young:** Longitudinal ribs, often purple in colour.

**Mature:** Stringy, pale brown bark.

**Old:** Woody and stringy, often grey in colour. Can be 6-7 cm thick.

## What should I do?

### Physical control:

- Trace the vine back to its roots.
- Either hand pull any small vines or cut close to the ground and dig out the roots.
- Cut vines can be left in the tree to break down naturally.
- Take out a section of the vine above the cut stump to ensure hanging vines are not in contact with the ground, as vines can take root and grow a new plant.

### Chemical control:

- Trace the vine back to its roots.
- Either dig out the roots, or cut the vine close to the roots and treat with a herbicide gel, preferably picloram or triclopyr-based as this travels down the root system.
- Cut vines can be left in the tree to break down naturally.
- Take out a section of the vine above the cut stump to ensure hanging vines are not in contact with the ground as vines can take root and grow a new plant.
- Large infestations can be sprayed, and this should be done during flowering / prior to seeding.
- Vines may need to be re-treated or new seedlings removed.

**Caution:** When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed. **Disclaimer:** Mention of product trade names does not endorse these products nor imply criticism of similar products not mentioned. The Otago Regional Council does not give any warranty that the information is accurate or complete or that it is suitable for all circumstances.

## Tips for managing old man's beard

- To prevent damage to the host plant, you can leave vines above the cut to break down naturally. The vegetation will start to wilt within a few days. Where there's no wilting, start at the live foliage and work back to check for vines you may have missed.
- Where there are multiple stems, treat all stems or dig out entire root systems.
- Check the stump regularly for regrowth and treat again if needed.
- If it's growing in a hedge and is hard to trace, two people are better than one — one person tugs on the vine and the other person traces it back to the ground.
- If it's growing on a common boundary, talk to your neighbour and deal with the situation together.

For more information visit  
[orc.govt.nz/oldmansbeard](https://orc.govt.nz/oldmansbeard)

