

Perennial Nettle

(*Urtica Dioca*)

Perennial Nettle is a native of Europe and was first recorded in New Zealand in 1870. It is a particular problem in South Otago mainly Balclutha, Lawrence and Clydevale.

Why is Perennial Nettle a pest plant?

The stems and leaves of this plant are covered with stinging bristly hairs, which can deliver a vicious sting if people accidentally come into contact with them. The sting causes itching and burning which may last for several days. Animals shy away from the plant because of its stinging hairs. The pollen from this plant may cause hay fever.

Perennial Nettle's extensive system of underground rhizomes, and its ability to form tall dense stands means it can easily invade paddocks and dominate good pasture. It tolerates a wide range of conditions, soil types and localities from shade and damp, to very dry. It can be found in pastures, in areas where stock shelter or congregate, waste areas, river banks, roadsides and old house sites.

How do I identify Perennial Nettle?



It can grow up to 1.5 metres high. Its stems are woody, its flowers are green, and its leaf is a lighter colour green than common stinging nettle (*Urtica urens*). Perennial Nettle grows taller than common stinging nettle and it has an extensive system of underground rhizomes, whereas common nettle does not have rhizomes. Its seeds are 1 to 1.5mm long, flat, oval and yellow to greyish in colour. Its underground rhizomes can spread 2.5m in a season.

Suggested control options

The Council encourages people to take the following eradication steps: Spray approved herbicides between spring and autumn when the plant is actively growing. Use herbicides at application rates recommended by the manufacturer and wear protective clothing. Alternatively, the plant can be dug out.

Land occupier obligations

In Otago, responsibility for controlling Perennial Nettle lies with the landowner or occupier. The plant is identified as a pest and is banned under the Otago Regional Council Pest Plant Management Strategy. Sites of Perennial Nettle can be reported to the Council. It is illegal to sell, propagate, or distribute any parts of this pest plant in Otago. Council staff inspect properties from November to January, looking for infestations of Perennial Nettle.

Follow up management

Control of this pest plant is not a one-off task. Follow up action must be regularly undertaken, for example, checking a cleared site for rhizome regrowth and seedling establishment.