

Spur valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) – a threat to rock outcrop vegetation



Spur valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) is a garden plant which flowers from October – February and has white, pink or magenta coloured flowers. Originally from the Mediterranean it likes rocky and coastal habitats. It naturalised in NZ from the late 1870's. It has fine wind borne seeds, which disperse and establish easily. On the eastern Port Hills, spur valerian has spread from gardens and roadsides to become a threat to the natural rock outcrop vegetation.



Spur valerian lining roadsides



Spur valerian invading rock outcrop habitat

The Christchurch City Council's goal is to prevent the establishment of spur valerian in the inner Lyttelton Harbour, Diamond Harbour and Banks Peninsula to protect the unique values of the volcanic rock outcrops.



Natural rock outcrop habitat with prostrate kowhai

Spur valerian is currently sparsely distributed on Banks Peninsula. With a small degree of effort and community co-operation, spur valerian can be held from establishing on Banks Peninsula roadsides and adjacent rock outcrops.



Resident happy to remove spur valerian multi stems and woody root root base treated with gel

Cutting and stump treating spur valerian is easy. The plant looks large, but the many branching stems lead back to a large woody tap root that can be easily sawn off at the base and the remaining stump treated with a chemical gel to stop resprouting.

Spraying with a weak 2% solution of roundup (Glyphosate) is also effective. Seedlings will need to be controlled for a few years afterwards with both treatments.

If you would like to keep spur valerian as a garden plant, de-heading the flowers before they go to seed at the end of November is another way to reduce seed spread.

There is no legal obligation to control spur valerian. However, if you are willing to help prevent the establishment of spur valerian on Banks Peninsula, managing this plant if it appears in your garden would be much appreciated.

For further information contact Di Carter, Park Ranger, Christchurch City Council, 941 7572.

<http://ecan.govt.nz/publications/General/weed-of-the-month-spur-valerian-000211.pdf>

Spur valerian

Centranthus ruber



Identification

- Perennial up to 80 cm tall, with a woody base and tap root
- Leaves are green or blue/green
- Flower heads which are either deep pink, red or white, are made up of many small flowers
- In full flower from October to December but can flower until June



Spur valerian flowering Photo: G. Livingstone (Ecan)



Spur valerian invading a rocky outcrop Photo: D. Carter (CCC)

Where is it a problem?

Spur valerian is usually found in rocky coastal areas but can also be found growing inland. In Canterbury it is spreading along roadsides.

Why is it a problem?

Spur valerian produces lots of wind spread seeds and can quickly form dense stands shading out other plants. It is a serious threat to rare native plants which are found on rocky outcrops and cliffs around Banks Peninsula, on the Port Hills and also some inland areas.

Have you seen it?

Staff at Christchurch City Council are keen to stop spur valerian establishing along roadsides from Corsair/ Cass Bay to Charteris Bay or elsewhere on Banks Peninsula. To report spur valerian to the council phone 03 941 7572 or email di.carter@ccc.govt.nz.

Control

It can be difficult to pull or dig out even small plants. Cutting and stump treating may be the best option—saw off the plant at the base and immediately treat the base with herbicide to prevent resprouting. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil or waterways.

What can you do?

If you have spur valerian in your garden consider removing it, particularly if you live in a coastal area or close to rocky outcrops.



Spur valerian Photo: Di. Carter (CCC)

Banks Peninsula spur valerian distribution overview map

