

Invasive Species Leaflet No.1



Rhododendron ponticum

Pink Beauty or Poisonous Pest?

Rhododendron ponticum is an exotic invasive species, brought here by Victorian collectors, which is spreading throughout the west of Ireland. It is easily recognised by distinctive attractive pink flowers and large dark green oval leaves.



What's the problem?

Spreads easily

Rhododendron ponticum spreads by thousands of wind borne seeds. One plant can cover a large area of ground. Its branches can take root and so form an impenetrable mass.

Out competes natives

The thick-leaved canopy of Rhododendron ponticum starves native plants of light and makes it difficult for anything to grow underneath. The poisonous waxy leaf litter prevents other seeds germinating.

Few natural enemies

These plants are poisonous to most animals and insects.

Destroys habitats

The plant invades three internationally important habitats; oak woods, bogs and heath. This results in a loss of native plants and animals from an area.

What can you do?

Do not plant Rhododendron ponticum as ornamental plants or hedging!

Methods of control

Rhododendron ponticum are hard to control. They do not flower and produce seeds until they are 10-12 years old so early control can prevent spread of the species.

Manual Removal

Digging the stumps out of the ground is an effective way of killing rhododendron but may not be an option on bog or near rivers due to ground disturbance.

Herbicide

Rhododendron kill can be achieved by treating freshly cut stumps with a herbicide solution. Glyphosate (Roundup) solutions (20%) are very effective particularly between November and March.

Re-growth on small stumps and young plants (less than 1.3m in height) can be killed by spraying between May and September. Herbicides should be used in dry weather and away from watercourses.

Invasive Species Leaflets available from:



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