

PEST CONTROL

Old man's beard *Clematis vitalba*



Identifying Old Man's beard

- 1,2 Developing flowers
- 3 Younger vines are purple in colour (older vines become woody and gray).
- 4 Stems have five leaflets

Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*) was brought to New Zealand as a garden plant.

Originally used to cover trellises or lattices, it quickly escaped from gardens to become well-established in many parts of Otago.

It is now considered the most damaging climbing plant introduced in New Zealand, capable of smothering attractive trees and shrubs.

Land occupiers are legally required to destroy all Old Man's Beard on their land.



Top photo

From April to December the seed heads can look like bushy pom-poms. These are often still visible during autumn/winter.

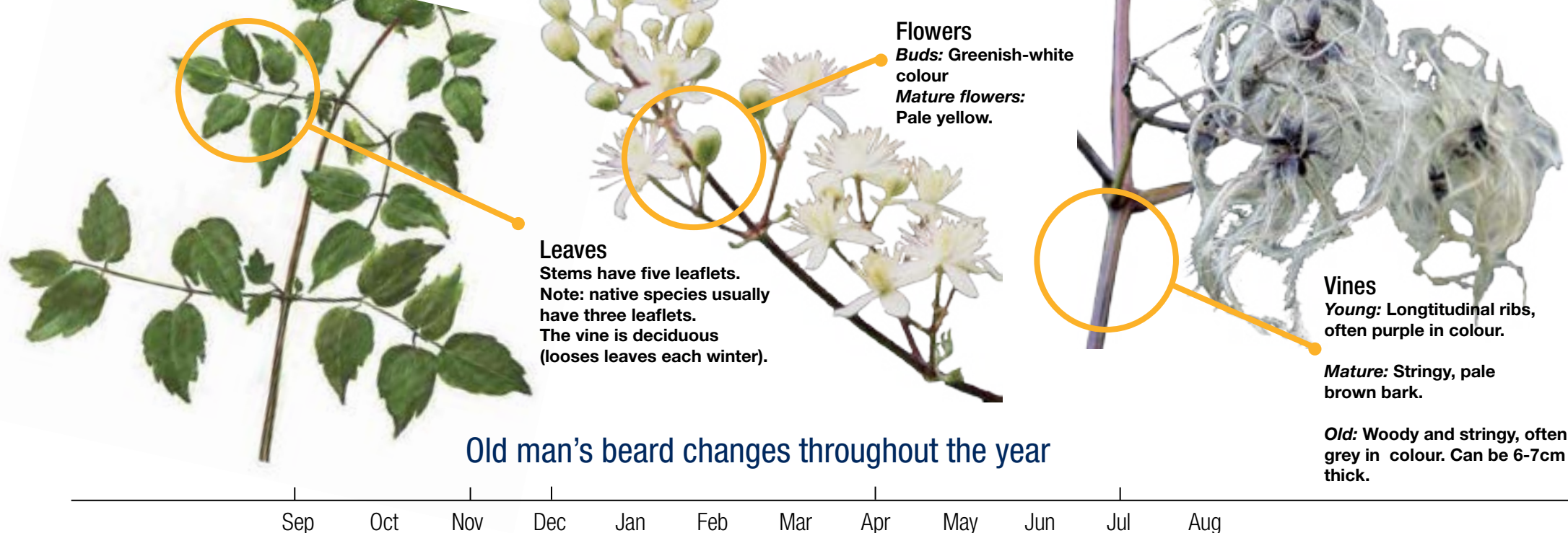
Bottom photo

Between December and April the flowers are small (2cm in diameter) and greenish-white in colour.



Identification

There are Clematis species that are not pest plants, so it's important to accurately identify Old Man's Beard.



Old man's beard changes throughout the year

Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug

Note: The native Clematis species are evergreen (don't lose their leaves), with leaves coming in groups of three. The vines are smooth, and flower between **September and November**.

The flowers are small (2cm in diameter), greenish-white in colour, appearing between **December and April**.

The seed heads which appear after flowering are the most distinguishing feature. These are pom-pom shaped, fluffy, off-white in colour, and are visible from **April to July**.

Why is it a pest plant?

Old Man's Beard is a vigorous climbing vine that can dominate a range of habitats. It commonly grows in residential gardens, road reserves, rail corridors, vacant sections, and waste areas. Despite extensive control in Otago, many affected sites still remain, and new infestations appear regularly.

Control option

To achieve best results, control should be carried out between November and April when the plant is actively growing. The most effective way to treat a single plant is to trace the vine back to its roots.

These can either be dug out, or the vine can be cut close to the ground and treated with a herbicide gel or with a glyphosate-based product. The manufacturer's instructions should be followed when using these products.

Do not leave vines trailing along the ground, as these can take root and establish new plants.

However, it is fine to leave hanging stems in the tree to die. For large infestations where a single root cannot be identified, an overall foliage spray is the most effective option.

Follow-up control

Successful control of Old Man's Beard is often not a one-off task. Check infested sites regularly for re-growth after control measures have been carried out. Vines may need to be re-treated or new seedlings removed.

For more detailed information on identification and control methods, visit our website at www.orc.govt.nz or contact us on 0800 474 082.