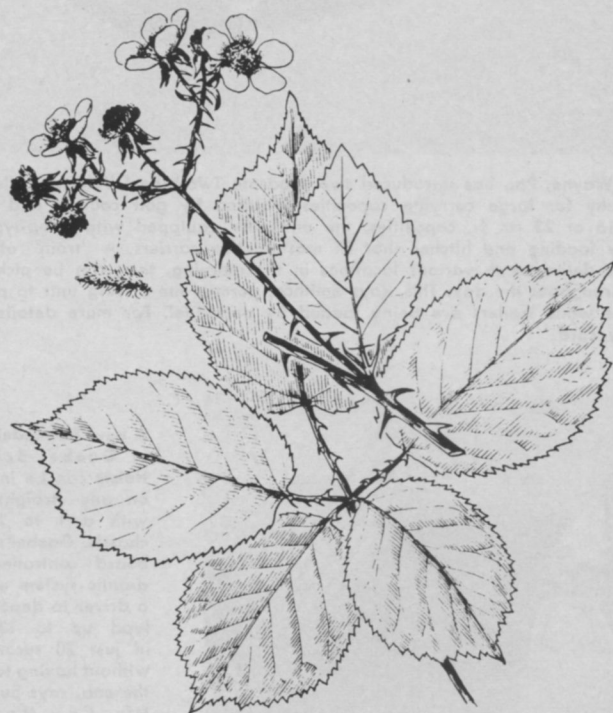


HIMALAYA BLACKBERRY

(*Rubus procerus*)



Drawing from: Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3, by C. L. Hitchcock et al.

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There are many species of blackberry (all in the genus *Rubus* in the Rose Family), but the specific one referred to here is the Himalaya blackberry (*R. procerus*). Native to Europe and parts of Asia and North Africa and now widely spread throughout the world, it has escaped from cultivation and become a serious weed problem in this country—especially along the Pacific Coast. What appears to be the same plant, but given a different specific name (*R. fruticosus*), escaped from cultivation in Australia and New Zealand, where it is considered a noxious weed. It is sometimes said that the western side of New Zealand's South Island has only one blackberry bush, but that bush is 100 miles long.

Himalaya blackberry is a sprawling evergreen bush that may reach a height of 10 feet, with trailing stems up to 20 feet long. The stems or canes vary from green to reddish-purple in color and have numerous hooked or straight thorns or prickles from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch long. Prickles also occur on the leaf petioles. The leaves generally have five leaflets, although those on the flowering canes sometimes have only three. Leaflets are roundish to oblong, 4 to 5 inches long, serrate, with tapering apices. The flowers are formed in large terminal panicles, each flower being about 1 inch across and having five white or pink petals and numerous stamens and pistils. The fruits are roundish—red when young and shiny black at maturity—with large, succulent drupelets.

New canes are produced each year from the crown, replacing those which die naturally within a few years time. New plants are started by rooting from the tips of parent plants as well as by seeds that germinate in the fall or spring. These seeds, however, generally will not survive unless they happen to fall on bare ground or where moisture conditions remain good. If they do survive their first year they become vigorous, especially in moist areas. It is noteworthy that although Himalaya blackberries are most troublesome in moist sites or along ditches containing flowing water, they can also occur on the margins of such areas, where they are on dry ground in the summer.

The first step in controlling Himalaya blackberries is to drain the land, if possible, or at least to attempt to improve the drainage. Control is difficult—and in many cases totally unsuccessful—when the plants are allowed to remain in water. If the veins are growing on banks or on dry land, however, effective control can be achieved with persistence; the following discussion refers to plants growing under these conditions.

The plants should be thoroughly sprayed in June or July while in the flowering or fruiting stage of growth. Picloram or ester forms of either 2,4,5-T or silvex are effective sprays. Burning the dead canes in November or later, when burning conditions are good, will greatly aid in treatment of the regrowth. The sprouts should then be sprayed the following June or July, after they have become well established. Some retreatment the third year may be required to achieve complete control.

Of the herbicides mentioned, picloram is the most effective, as a relatively high degree of control may be attained after a single application (when the plants are not standing in wet ground). However, hazards involved in its use are important considerations, and as a consequence 2,4,5-T and silvex are currently in more common usage.