

## Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*)

### A Jekyll-and-Hyde invasive

Himalayan Blackberries are loved by cooks for their sweet fruit and by beekeepers for the nectar they provide, but the large, dense, impenetrable thickets are a serious problem for native species. Himalayan Blackberry, often thought of as native, is found in forest edges, agricultural areas, along river and stream banks, and in urban areas including gardens.

#### Impact on Communities and Native Species

The Himalayan Blackberry grows rapidly, smothering native plants and upsetting ecosystems. In less than two years, a single cane cutting can produce a blackberry thicket five metres in diameter that will shade out native plants. The dense canopy can be particularly harmful to young Garry Oak saplings, which are shade intolerant. Himalayan Blackberries grow along river or stream banks and their large thickets can drive away deep-rooted native shrubs. Without the stability these native plants provide, the banks are prone to erosion and increased flooding. Blackberry patches provide homes, protection and food for other invasive species including rats, starlings and feral domestic rabbits. The thick strands of blackberries can prevent large animals from accessing water and even trap young livestock. The rapid spread of the plant decreases usable pasture land for farmers. As well, berry-pickers may further harm native plants, trampling them to get at the best berries.

#### Invasion History

The Himalayan Blackberry, despite its name, comes from Europe. It was introduced to America in 1885 by an American botanist who prized the plant for its abundant berries. By 1945, the plant had spread along the Pacific coast and it is now widespread in much of the province. The fruit of the plant, the blackberry, is an obstacle in controlling the spread of the species, as people like the berries and want easy access to them.



Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*)

## **Identifying Characteristics:**

- canes around 3 metres high and 12 metres long, covered in slightly curved thorns
- leaves are usually large and rounded or oblong, and divided into five leaflets
- distinguished from other blackberries by their leaves, which are dark green on the upper side and greyish-green on the underside, and by the coarsely, serrated margins on the leaves
- pinkish/white, five-petaled flowers grow in clusters of 5–20 during spring
- shiny, deep purple berries about 2 centimetres long