

# Heather

Leaves

*Calluna vulgaris*

- Evergreen perennial shrub with woody stems. Varies from low lying mat to upright dwarf trees at 1.25m.
- Densely haired while young, hairless as it matures.
- Stems have dark orange to red bark with small stalkless leaves growing in four vertical rows along branches.
- Bell-shaped flowers, generally pale purple although pink and white-flowered plants also occur. Heather flowers have petals which are separate for most of their length whereas other similar plant (*Erica* sp.) have tubular or urn-like flower of fused petals.



**Declared weed under the Biosecurity Act 2019**

## REMOVING HEATHER

### By hand

- Seedlings and small plants can be hand pulled in moist or sandy soil. Take care as plants break off easily and remaining roots can reshoot. Plants should be left on site to break down.

### Cut stump method

- Cut stems as low to the ground as possible and paint undiluted Glyphosate herbicide on the stump within 15 seconds.

### Foliar spraying

- Foliar spraying can be highly effective, providing it is carefully chosen and selectively applied. It is generally limited to small plants and regrowth. Several herbicides are effective on heather including Metsulfuron-methyl (eg. Associate) which is of very low toxicity. The addition of a wetting agent or penetrant will improve uptake of the herbicide. For spraying to be effective, cover all the foliage with herbicide.

*Bell-shaped flowers*

Ongoing follow-up monitoring and control will be required to manage the long-lived seedbank.

## IMPACTS

Heather has potential to be a significant environmental weed in Tasmania.

It can form a dense canopy with persistent leaf litter which reduces diversity in native vegetation. It has shown potential to transform tussock communities and to invade a variety of other vegetation types, including heathlands, grasslands, and open forest, from sea level to upland areas.

It is extremely tolerant of harsh conditions including frost and waterlogging. It can colonise up to altitudes of 1500 m and is therefore a serious threat to Tasmania's unique alpine environments.

In addition, heather can be expected to change fire regimes in natural ecosystems by altering the nature of fuel loads.