

Chemical Control

Herbicides usually provide the best and most cost effective method for *Gunnera* control. A systemic herbicide that will kill the roots of the plant is needed and a glyphosate based formula approved for use near water is recommended. Other herbicides containing 2, 4-d amine or triclopyr may be used in sites away from water. The weedkiller can be applied in 2 ways.

Foliar spray: Use the *manufacturers recommended concentration* in a knapsack sprayer to spot treat individual plants or broadscale spraying of dense growth. Spraying should only be carried out in cool, dry, calm weather. A long lance sprayer is useful to ensure coverage of large plants.

Cut and paint technique: Leaf stalks should be cut close to the base of the plant and the stumps *immediately* painted with a 25% solution of glyphosate applied using a brush or sponge. The leaves can be composted or allowed to rot down on site. This method is recommended for sensitive sites such as around waterbodies.

Please take care when using herbicides, and carefully consider your impacts on nearby land or waterways. Read the label carefully, and always use appropriate safety equipment.



Gunnera flower

Timing

In Ireland, herbicide is most effective for treating *Gunnera* when applied in late summer or early autumn, when the plant is vigorous and before the leaves begin to die back. It should take about 3-4 years of annual treatments to clear the worst of the infestation, after which you should perform annual checks to control any new seeding growth.

All Plant Protection Products should be used in accordance with the product label and with Good Plant Protection Practice as prescribed in the European Communities (Authorization, Placing on the Market, Use and Control of Plant Protection Products) Regulations, 2003 (S.I. No. 83 of 2003). Herbicides / pesticides authorised for professional use may only be used by persons who have completed the prescribed training and hold the relevant specified certificate(s). <http://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/>

Further Information

Further Information about *Gunnera* and other invasive species can be found at:

<http://biodiversity.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>
<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/>
<http://www.invasivespeciesireland.com>

Contact Details

To report *Gunnera* or other problem species, or for advice on planning a control programme in your area contact the Galway County Biodiversity Project Manager Elaine O'Riordan.

Phone: 091-495921

Email: invasivespecies@galwaycoco.ie



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



the spread of INVASIVE SPECIES

Gunnera tinctoria

Giant Rhubarb

Gunnera, Elaine O'Riordan



About

Gunnera tinctoria, also known as Chilean or Giant Rhubarb, is a South American plant that is spreading out of control in the West of Ireland. It is now widespread in parts of Connemara.

How to recognise it?

Gunnera is a large, exotic plant that looks completely out of place in Ireland. In summer it grows to about 2m tall, with huge rhubarb-like leaves and seed-heads in red/orange spikes at the base. In winter it dies back, leaving withered black stumps, sleeves and flower heads.



New *Gunnera* growth in spring

Why is it a problem?

During the spring and summer months, *Gunnera* forms huge, dense thickets that take over gardens, derelict sites, riverbanks, roadsides, farmland and open countryside. It is unsightly in the scenic Connemara landscape. Along rivers it prevents access for anglers and livestock and can lead to erosion of riverbanks. It can block ditches, colonise productive land and replace valuable wildlife habitat.



Gunnera infestation

How does it spread?

Gunnera has thick, persistent rhizomes (underground stems resembling roots) which can re-grow from even the tiniest fragment. In Ireland it is often spread by the movement of infested soil or rocks, often associated with road building and development. Mature plants can also flower and produce seed, which are transported by birds, water and traffic or in the movement of soil or vegetation.

Legislation

Gunnera is listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) which makes it an offence under Regulation 49 to *plant, disperse, allow or cause to grow* this plant in the Republic of Ireland.

Regulation 50 makes it an offence to *import, buy, sell, breed, reproduce or propagate, advertise, offer or export for sale, publish a price list, transport or distribute* any species on the Third schedule. (This regulation is not in effect pending Ministerial notice)

A licence may be obtained in certain circumstances to permit these activities.

What can you do?

- Report the location of the weed to Galway County Council or the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Inform landowners who have *Gunnera* on their property.
- Do not dig close to the plant or break up the rhizome, as new plants can grow from each fragment.
- Do chop the flowers off mature plants in Spring/early summer before they go to seed.
- Do not dump plant cuttings or soil elsewhere.
- Control: Use the most suitable method to remove the infestation from your property.

Manual Control

Small plants may be grubbed out if the entire root can be removed. However, digging is not generally recommended for *Gunnera*, because soil disturbance and fragmentation of the plant may actually encourage the growth of new plants. Where possible, removing the flowers of mature plants in spring/early summer before they mature can help to prevent them from spreading seed. Cut seed heads should be disposed of by burning, deep burial or collected in black bags for removal to landfill.



Gunnera flower