

Controlling Camphor Laurels

Camphor Laurel, *Cinnamomum camphora*, is a tree that has been used extensively along the eastern coast of N.S.W. in gardens, parks and school grounds.

It is native to China and Japan. Camphor was extracted from the leaves and used in medicines and mothballs up until the 1920's, when camphor oil was produced artificially.

Although it is attractive and can be a valued shade tree, it has adapted to our conditions TOO WELL.

It is now causing serious problems in our bushland, rural areas, waterways and also in urban areas.

Chemicals produced by the camphor laurel can poison fishlings and other water life.

Did you know - a camphor laurel tree can live for 500 years?

How do you recognise a camphor laurel tree?

The camphor laurel:

- is an evergreen tree with bright green foliage in Spring,
- grows to a large spreading tree which can reach 20 metres in height, often twice as wide as it is high,
- has glossy green leaves on top, the under side has a blue/green colour with a waxy bloom,
- has rough greyish bark featuring prominent vertical cracks,
- produces small white flowers in Spring followed by many green, pea sized fruit turning black when ripe in April-June.
- crushed leaves produce the characteristic camphor smell.

Seedlings can be recognised by their red stems and 3 veined leaves.

Why has the camphor laurel tree become a pest?

This tree is a prolific producer of seed. Some birds feed on these seeds, which then germinate readily.

Growing in suburban backyards, its massive root structure can cause serious damage to concrete structures and block drains.

In bushland areas it often competes with, and displaces native trees and other vegetation.

In these conditions it can develop into a single species community, depriving many birds and animals of their natural food supply.

Do you need permission to remove camphor laurels?

You do NOT need permission to remove a camphor laurel tree from the local Government areas of Gosford, Wyong, Lake Macquarie and Cessnock UNLESS it is growing within 20m of a prescribed stream. Not all waterways are prescribed streams. If in doubt, contact the Infrastructure Planning & Natural Resources.

Do you need help identifying a camphor laurel?

- Some native plants may be mistaken for camphor laurel trees.
- If in doubt take a sample of fresh plant material, including several leaves on a stem, together with the fruit if possible.
- Place the sample in a bag with your contact name and phone number clearly marked and forward it to your local Council's Weeds Officer or show the plant sample to your local plant nursery for identification.

Checklist before removing camphor laurels

1. Make sure you properly identify the tree.
2. If using a tree contractor, ensure they have adequate insurance.
3. Is the timber useable? Check with your local wood turners association.
4. Consider replacement plants.

How can I remove camphor laurels?

- Hand pull small seedlings.
- Use glyphosate based herbicides. When used in accordance with the label directions, glyphosate herbicides are considered to be of low risk to persons, animals and the environment.

Using herbicides

- Always use herbicides strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's directions.
- Protect non-target plants from spray-drift.
- To be most effective, do not use chemicals before, during or straight after rain.
- Herbicides are most effective on new active growth.
- Spray only on a calm day.
- Use a marker dye; such as food colouring, in the herbicide to alert others that poison has been used.
- Get it right the first time as it will be harder to control the second time around.
- You may need professional help to remove trees.

Control strategies

Some common situations from which camphor laurel may need to be removed.

Camphor laurel growing on cleared sites in rural, residential or industrial areas.

- Seedlings that cannot be pulled by hand can be foliar sprayed with glyphosate based herbicide.
- Semi-mature to mature trees can be felled by a chainsaw and cut/stump painted.(see diagram)
- Machinery such as stump grinders and excavators can be used to remove stumps or rootballs.

Camphor laurel growing in bushland areas.

- Aim to encourage native regeneration and discourage weed invasion. This can be achieved by minimising soil disturbance and working progressively from the lowest weed density to the highest weed density.

- Immature trees to 4 metres can be treated using one of the methods described below.
- In isolated bushland areas, trees can be treated and left standing. Birds will use the dead trees as roosting sites and disseminate native seeds around the base of the trees and encourage natural regeneration. However, be aware that there is a risk of brittle timber from dead trees falling, possibly causing harm to persons, property or livestock.
- Consider replacement plants where there is poor prospect for natural regeneration to occur.

Camphor laurel within the felling distance of homes or other property assets.

- In this situation you will require professional assistance.
- The felling of trees in confined spaces is a high risk activity, which may involve the use of advanced climbing and roping techniques. There could be personal injury or extensive property damage.

Selecting a tree contractor: A tree contractor must -

- have insurance covering public liability and workers compensation, which you should sight
- comply with any industry standards.

Camphor laurel as a craftwood

- Camphor laurel is a timber often sought by wood turners for their craft.
- Local wood turners may be interested in using all or part of the felled tree, preferably trees that have a diameter at the base of greater than 450mm.
- Contact your local council for the names of local wood turners.

Techniques to control Camphor Laurels

The aim is to place a herbicide into the transport system of the plant. This is known as the sapwood and is located 3-5cm deep in the trunk. Follow up treatment may be needed for any signs of re-growth.

Hand Pulling

This method can only be used for seedlings.

- Wait for rain to moisten the soil around the seedling.
- Use a fork to loosen the soil around the plant roots.
- Take a firm grip of the plant near the ground and pull firmly.

Green Stem Painting (Basal Barking)

- Consult your local Council Weeds Officer for registered herbicides suitable for green stem painting.
- To be used for saplings up to 10cm diameter.
- Clear vegetation around the base of the sapling to maximise coverage of spray.
- At a height of about 30cm, paint, wipe or spray the herbicide on at least 30 cm of the green section of the trunk to the point of runoff.
- Avoid damage to desirable plants caused by herbicide drift.

Cut Stump

- Cut the plant as close as possible to the ground.

- Use a paintbrush, a spot gun applicator, eye- dropper or syringe to apply the undiluted herbicide around the outer rim (sapwood) of the cut.
- The herbicide must be applied while the sap is still flowing. If the delay in application is longer than about 30 seconds, re-cut and paint the fresh wound.
- On multiple stemmed trees, all trunks must be treated.

Drill Inject

- Using a cordless drill or a brace and bit, drill holes in a ring around the tree approx. 5 to 10cm apart and 3-5cm deep.
- Do not drill into the heartwood or middle of the tree.
- Holes should be drilled as low on the trunk or stem as possible.
- Inject the herbicide into the holes.
- On multiple stemmed trees all stems must be treated.

Frill Inject

- Use a small axe or a mallet and sharp chisel to cut pockets around the trunk as low to the ground as possible and approx. 15cm apart.
- Take care not to ringbark the tree, as the herbicide will not be circulated.
- Pockets should penetrate the trunk to a depth to reach the sapwood and angled downwards to enable the herbicide to pool.
- Inject approx. 2ml of undiluted herbicide into each pocket within 30 seconds of making the cut.
- On multiple trunked plants, all stems must be treated.

Replacement plants for Camphor Laurels

There are many Australian native plants available at your local nursery that will provide all the benefits of camphor laurels without causing the damage.

Common Name	Name	Height	Local	Comments
Scentless rosewood	<i>Synoum glandulosum</i>	2-9m	*	Good shade, attractive tree, favourite with birds
Maidens blush	<i>Sloanea australis</i>	2-15m	*	Blushing new foliage, attractive flowers, buttressed trunk, moist areas
Tree heath	<i>Trochocarpa laurina</i>	3-5m	*	Attractive colourful new growth
Bush cherry	<i>Syzygium australe</i>	3-6m	*	Good shade tree, edible fruit. Suitable for beachside planting
Magenta Lilly Pilly	<i>Syzygium paniculatum</i>	3-8m	*	Shade tree, edible fruit, colourful young foliage
Turnipwood	<i>Rapanea howittiana</i>	3-10m	*	Attractive, hardy, cream flowers on old wood

Common Name	Name	Height	Local	Comments
Tuckeroo	<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	3-10m	*	Hardy and adaptable, good shade tree. Colourful new foliage
Black wattle	<i>Callicoma serratifolia</i>	4-5m	*	Beautiful shrub/tree, grows along creeks and streams
Bolly gum	<i>Neolitsea dealbata</i>	4-6m	*	Can be mistaken for a laurel when young. Very attractive foliage
Boobialla	<i>Myoporum acuminatum</i>	4-6m	*	Moist well-drained areas on the coast, flowers white with purple dots.
Cheese tree	<i>Glochidion ferdinandi</i>	4-8m	*	A dependable shade tree, interesting fruit. A pioneer plant
Water gum	<i>Tristaniopsis laurina</i>	4-10m	*	A handsome tree, good shade. Attractive bark, small yellow flowers
Blueberry Ash	<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>	4-10m	*	Very attractive foliage, fringed petals, blue fruit
Sandpaper Fig	<i>Ficus coronata</i>	4-10m	*	Local fig, good shade, interesting rough foliage
Blue Lilly Pilly	<i>Syzygium oleosum</i>	5-8m	*	Dense deep green foliage, white flowers edible blue fruit
Lemon myrtle	<i>Backhousia citriodora</i>	6m	*	Lemon scented, attractive tree
Red Ash	<i>Alphitonia excelsa</i>	6-10m	*	Interesting trunk, fast growing, attractive foliage. A pioneer plant
Brush turpentine	<i>Rhodamnia rubescens</i>	7m	*	Perfumed cream flowers, reddish brown stringy bark
Rose Walnut	<i>Endiandra discolor</i>	10-25m	*	Very attractive tree, interesting trunk. A large street or park tree
Hard Quandong	<i>Elaeocarpus obovatus</i>	10-20m	*	Bushy crown, white bell shaped flowers
Brown Jack	<i>Cryptocarya microneura</i>	10-20m	*	A good shade tree, attractive foliage. Bird attracting
Native laurel	<i>Cryptocarya glaucescens</i>	10-20m	*	Flowers at same time as camphor laurel. Food for pigeons

Produced by members of the Camphor Laurel Task Force:

Cessnock City Council, City of Lake Macquarie, Gosford City Council, Lake Macquarie Landcare
Resource Office, Australian Plants Society, Wyong Shire Council, National Parks & Wildlife Service