

Balsam pear

Momordica charantia



Balsam pear is a native of Asia and is widely grown in tropical and subtropical areas for both food and medicinal purposes. It is widespread in northern Queensland and vigorously competes with crops and native plants on the fringes of rainforests.

Legal requirements

Balsam pear is not a prohibited or restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. However, by law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on balsam pear. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Description

This slender-stemmed, twining–climbing annual vine with tendrils lives about three months and has a strong, unpleasant smell.



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Its soft, mid-green leaves are stalked and deeply divided into 5–7 shallowly scalloped lobes, up to 15 cm across. Yellow flowers with five petals, about 2 cm across, develop in leaf axils, each with a small, green, leaf-like bract on the flower stalk.

Fruit is orange-yellow when ripe, 10–20 cm long, ridged and covered with blunt warts. Once mature, it bursts lengthwise and curls back to expose the edible scarlet flesh around its many black seeds.

Balsam pear can also be known as bitter gourd or bitter melon.

Control

Manual control

Hand pull isolated plants and small infestations, making sure that all roots and stem fragments are removed. Plant pieces should either be bagged and taken to the dump or hung up off the ground to prevent reshooting.

Herbicide control

There is only one herbicide (flumioxazin) currently registered for control of balsam pear in commercial and industrial areas.

A permit also allows people generally to use some herbicide products to control balsam pear as an invasive plant in various situations.

See Table 1 for the treatment options in situations allowed by the permit.

Prior to using the herbicides listed under this permit (PER11463) you must read or have read to you and understand the conditions of the permit. To obtain a copy of this permit visit apvma.gov.au.

Follow up

Monitor treated areas regularly for any new seedlings or regrowth.

More information

For more information contact your local government or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

Table 1. Herbicides for the control of balsam pear

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Registration details	Comments
Rights-of-way, roadsides, edges of railway lines, and around buildings, guideposts, power and telephone poles and fencelines	Flumioxazin 750 g/kg (Payload Herbicide)	372–465 g/ha		Foliar application Consult label for details
Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of-way, vacant lots, wastelands, dunal and coastal areas	2,4-D 700 g/L (e.g. Nufarm Amicide Advance 700)	267 mL per 100 L water	APVMA permit PER11463 (expires 30/04/2027)	Consult label for details
	2,4-D 625 g/L (e.g. Nufarm 2,4-D Amine 625 Herbicide)	300 mL per 100 L water		
	Fluroxypyr 200 g/L (e.g. Flagship 200)	1 L per 100 L water		

Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

