

Tradescantia

Tradescantia fluminensis

Tradescantia fluminensis (Wandering Willie/Jew) is a highly invasive, brittle, succulent groundcover native to South America that forms dense mats in moist, shady areas. It smothers native seedlings and groundcover, thrives in disturbed forests, and spreads rapidly via stem fragments. It is a major environmental pest requiring persistent, repeated control efforts.

Identification

Stems: Hairless, fleshy (succulent), and succulent, trailing along the ground and rooting easily at nodes.

Leaves: Glossy, dark green, smooth, and slightly fleshy (3–6 cm long), ovate-elliptic with a pointed tip. The base of the leaf forms a sheath that wraps around the stem.

Flowers: Small (approx. 2 cm diameter), white, three-petaled flowers, appearing in clusters near the tip of the branches.

Flowers (Season): Generally present from December to January.



Varieties: While the standard form is green, variegated (white and green striped) or purple-backed cultivars exist, but they often revert to the standard, fully green form.

Control

Herbicide (best option): Spray with Triclopyr (e.g., Grazon, Hydrocotyle Killer) mixed with a penetrant/wetter, especially during spring or summer. Alternative Herbicides: Weed Weapon, Glyphosate, or Metsulfuron-methyl can be used, though triclopyr is generally more effective. Application: Thoroughly wet all foliage. A second treatment 2–3 months later is almost always necessary to kill survivors and regrowth.

Raking: In dry, hot conditions, rake the weed into piles to dry out and die.

Removal: Roll up mats of the weed, ensuring no fragments remain in the soil.

Disposal: Do not compost. Burn, bury deeply, or dispose of at a transfer station to prevent re-infestation.

Shading: Covering infested areas with black plastic for 6–12 months can kill the weed.

