



Hairy menace seeding

There's a hairy menace creeping through Canterbury gardens.

Old man's beard is setting seed now, and Environment Canterbury is urging people to get rid of the plant pest before it spreads further. Biosecurity staff are checking properties throughout the region to make sure infestations of the smothering vine have been cleared.

"That work should be just about finished now," says team leader, Rob McCaw. "It's important

to get rid of it before it sets seed and creates an even bigger problem."

Old man's beard must go:

- If the infestation covers less than 100 square metres

• If the next door property is clear of old man's beard back to 20 metres, then yours must be too.

The best way to kill the vine is to cut it as close as possible to the ground and paint the clean stump with herbicide.

Old man's beard is a member of the clematis family. It has clusters of smallish white to yellow-white flowers that don't appear until mid summer (most natives and ornamentals are spring flowering), five leaflets per stem and very fluffy seeds that ripen in autumn. Young vines have a distinctive ribbed appearance.

Under the Regional Pest Management Strategy, the regional council can order property owners to carry out plant pest control. If the work is not done, a contractor is called and the job is billed back to the property owner.

Rob McCaw says some of the worst infestations are in places like Christchurch, Ashburton and Timaru, particularly in older suburbs, where the vine was originally purchased as an ornamental garden plant.