

Removal

Removal is not recommended as a form of control for large plants. However, it is very effective with smaller plants, in particular new seedlings.



Large brown rhizomes are a visible feature in the winter

Gunnera has a rhizome which can easily be broken into pieces that have the potential to re-sprout. Care must be taken not to leave any fragments behind.

Once the plants have been removed they must be disposed of carefully. The rhizomes will not compost, although it is safe to compost the leaves. **DO NOT** dispose of plants by dumping in another area. Options available include leaving them in a black plastic bag, burning, drying out or deep burial.



GUNNERA IS SPREADING AND DAMAGING OUR COUNTRYSIDE. PLEASE HELP CONTROL THE INVADER!



Comhshaol, Oidhreachta agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



For further information:

www.mayococo.ie/heritage
www.invasivespeciesireland.com

An action of the County Mayo Heritage Plan 2006–2011

INVASIVE ALIEN PLANT



GIANT RHUBARB

(Gunnera tinctoria)

Gunnera is an alien invasive plant that was first introduced to Ireland over 100 years ago. It is predominantly found in western coastal counties. **Gunnera** is spreading rapidly and something must be done.

The aim of this leaflet is to provide information on the damaging effects of this plant and the methods that can be used to control it.

WHERE HAS GUNNERA COME FROM?

Gunnera tinctoria is a plant native to South America. It was introduced to Ireland over 100 years ago, possibly as an ornamental plant. Its natural habitat has very similar climatic conditions to those found in the west coast of Ireland.

In the west of Ireland, **Gunnera** is predominant along roadsides and waterways, on coastal cliffs and disused farmlands and quarries.



Gunnera tinctoria growing between heather and along a river.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Gunnera is a large herbaceous plant that forms dense colonies. It can grow up to 2 meters in height. It has large leathery umbrella-shaped leaves, with spikes on the back of the leaves and along the stems. The size of the leaves and their early spring emergence prevent native plants from germinating or growing due to shading. Despite its similar appearance, **Gunnera** is not related to rhubarb.

The plant has a large rhizome, which can grow up to 2 meters in length along the ground. The rhizome is the visible stump which is exposed when the leaves die back in winter.

Gunnera can resprout from tiny fragments of the rhizome and can reproduce by seed; each flower head can produce over 250,000 seeds a year. This allows the plant to spread rapidly and makes it difficult to eradicate.



Gunnera tinctoria



Gunnera tinctoria seedling growing in gravel



Large fruiting head in flower (left). seeds (right). Seeds turn red/orange when ripe.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CONTROL IT?

Chemical Control

To date trials have taken place using herbicides containing glyphosate i.e. RoundUp. Success has been achieved both here in Ireland and in New Zealand.

When to apply?

Late in the growing season (late Aug/Sept), when the plants are fully grown, before the leaves die back.

How much?

Using the recommended concentration, thoroughly spray the leaves on both sides if possible. If the plants are very close to waterways, or are not possible to spray due to the size of the plants, the leaves can be cut at the base and herbicide applied directly to the stumps. Herbicide should be applied immediately after cutting, with a brush or sponge. It is possible that herbicide will need to be reapplied to larger plants.

Remember:

Fine weather is necessary for application of herbicides. If spraying wait until a calm day to prevent spray drift. Use safety clothing and a mask when using herbicides. Always follow the manufacturer's advice and instructions. If you propose to spray in lands that are designated for nature conservation i.e. SACs (Special Areas of Conservation), NHAs (Natural Heritage Areas) or SPAs (Special Protection Areas) you must seek consent from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Telephone: Ballycroy 098 49996, Connemara 095 41054).



Gunnera applied with RoundUp (left). Blue dye to show herbicide applied using Cut and Paint technique (right).