

# Balsam pear

## Bitter melon

*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 steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants and animals under their control.

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants and animals in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on certain species. 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.



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 currently registered for control of balsam pear. This applies to balsam pear up to 100 mm high growing in sugarcane.

There are no herbicide products specifically registered for the control of balsam pear in Queensland. However, a permit held by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries allows people generally to use some herbicide products to control balsam pear as an environmental weed 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 [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

## Follow up

Monitor treated areas regularly for any new seedlings or regrowth.

## Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

**Table 1. Herbicides for the control of balsam pear**

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Registration details	Comments
Sugar cane	Fluroxypyr 200 g/L (e.g. Flagship 200)	1.3 L/ha		Ground application Consult label for details
	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L (e.g. Starane Advanced)	780 mL/ha		
	Fluroxypyr 400 g/L (e.g. Comet 400)	650 mL/ha		
	Fluroxypyr 200 g/L (e.g. Flagship 200)	1.5 L/ha		Aerial application Consult label for details
	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L (e.g. Starane Advanced)	900 mL/ha		
	Fluroxypyr 400 g/L (e.g. Comet 400)	750 mL/ha		
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 500 g/L	400 mL per 100 L water	APVMA permit PER11463	Consult label for details
	2,4-D 625 g/L	300 mL per 100 L water	Permit expires 30/06/2023	
	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.**

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Fact sheets are available from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) service centres and our Customer Service Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, DAF does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

