

Cherry Laurel

(*Prunus laurocerus*)



Family name: Rosaceae (Rose family)

Common name/s: Cherry Laurel, Common Laurel, English Laurel



Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerus*) is an evergreen shrub or small tree commonly used as a hedge or screening plant. In Ireland, it is considered invasive in some areas, particularly in woodlands and forest edges, where it can form dense stands that outcompete native vegetation. The plant spreads through bird-dispersed seeds and vegetative growth, making management challenging. Control methods include mechanical removal, herbicide application, and careful monitoring to prevent its spread. If left unmanaged, Cherry Laurel can significantly impact biodiversity and alter woodland habitat structure

Description - Cherry Laurel is a large shrub or small tree noted for its glossy leaves, dense growth habit, and fragrant flowers. It is widely used as a hedge or screening plant in gardens and parks. However, it can become invasive in certain environments, outcompeting native species.

Key characteristics include:

Height: Typically grows to a height of 2 to 8 metres, though it can reach up to 15 metres if left unpruned.



Leaves: The leaves are broad, oblong, and leathery, measuring 10-25 cm in length and 3-7 cm in width. They are dark green and glossy on the upper surface, with a lighter green underside, and have finely serrated edges. When crushed, the leaves release a bitter almond-like scent due to cyanogenic compounds.

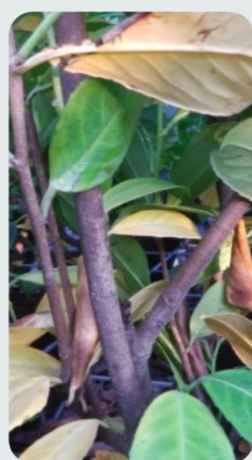


Flowers: Produces small, white, fragrant flowers in upright racemes (clusters) that are 5-12 cm long, appearing in late spring. The flowers attract pollinators, such as bees.

Fruit: The flowers are followed by small, cherry-like berries that turn from red to black as they ripen.



The berries are toxic to humans if ingested, but birds consume them, aiding in seed dispersal.



Stem: The stems are woody, with grey-brown bark that becomes rougher with age.

Root: Cherry Laurel has a fibrous root system, which allows it to establish firmly and spread in a variety of soil types.



Habitat - Cherry Laurel is native to southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, where it grows in forests and along riverbanks.

In cultivation and introduced regions, it is often found in:

- Gardens and Parks: Widely planted as a hedge, screen, or ornamental shrub due to its dense foliage and rapid growth.
- Woodlands and Forest Edges: Can escape from cultivation and establish in woodlands, forest edges, and shaded areas, where it may become invasive.
- Roadsides and Disturbed Areas: Often found in disturbed soils, such as along roadsides and in abandoned areas.

The plant prefers moist, well-drained soils but can tolerate a variety of conditions, including clay, loam, and sandy soils. It grows best in partial to full shade, although it can also thrive in full sun.

Status in Ireland - In Ireland, Cherry Laurel is considered invasive in some areas, particularly in woodlands and forest edges, where it can form dense thickets that outcompete native species.

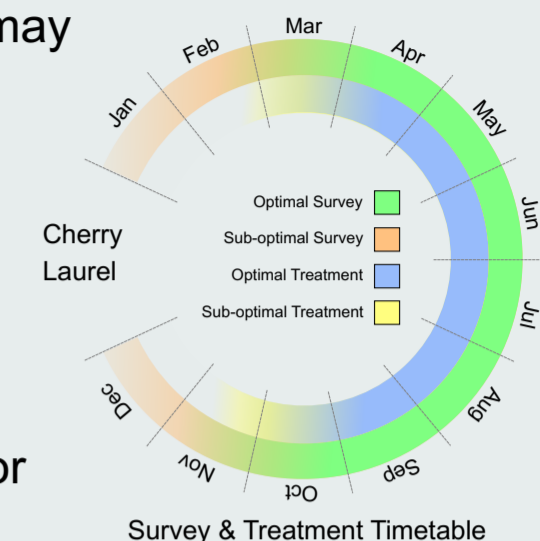
Its ability to spread through seed dispersal and vegetative growth makes it a threat to biodiversity in natural habitats.

Reproduction and Spread - Cherry Laurel spreads through both seed production and vegetative propagation:

- Seed Dispersal: The berries are consumed by birds, which disperse the seeds over long distances.
- Vegetative Growth: The plant can also spread by root suckers and layering, where branches touching the ground take root and form new plants.

Management and Control - Managing Cherry Laurel requires a combination of approaches to prevent its spread and remove established plants:

- Mechanical Control: Cutting or digging out the plants can be effective, but removal of the root system is necessary to prevent regrowth. Repeated cutting or mowing may be needed to exhaust the plant's energy reserves.
- Chemical Control: Herbicides may be applied to cut stumps or regrowth, particularly in larger infestations. Multiple treatments may be required for effective control.
- Preventative Measures: Avoid planting near natural or semi-natural habitats and monitor areas where the plant is present to detect early growth.



Ecological Impact - Cherry Laurel can have several ecological impacts in areas where it becomes established:

- Competition with Native Species: Forms dense thickets that outcompete native woodland plants, reducing biodiversity.
- Alteration of Habitat Structure: Its dense growth and evergreen nature can shade out other plants, changing the composition of the understory in woodlands.
- Potential Toxicity: The leaves and seeds contain cyanogenic compounds, which can be toxic to livestock and humans if ingested.



For further information and free advice, please contact:
Japanese Knotweed Control Ltd.



Email: mail@jkc.ie
Tel: +353 (0)86 250 8805
Web: www.jkc.ie

