



Spanish Bluebell

(*Hyacinthoides hispanica*)

HIGH RISK

Common Names

Spanish Bluebell, Wood Hyacinth, Garden Bluebell

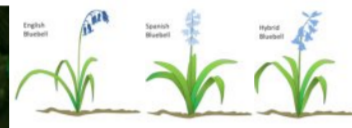
Family: Asparagaceae

Status in Ireland

The Spanish Bluebell is an introduced, non-native species in Ireland. It poses a conservation concern due to its ability to hybridise with the native English Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), producing hybrids (*Hyacinthoides × massartiana*) that can outcompete and displace native bluebell populations. The spread of these hybrids threatens the genetic purity and conservation status of the native bluebell.

Description / Profile

Due to the threat posed by hybridisation with the native English Bluebell, the presence of Spanish Bluebells in or near woodlands containing native populations should be discouraged. Conservationists advocate for planting native bluebells instead, to help preserve Ireland's natural heritage.



Size - Spanish Bluebell can grow up to 50 cm tall.

Leaves - Long, broad, and strap-shaped, typically measuring 20-40 cm in length and 1-4 cm in width. They grow from the base of the plant in a rosette formation, emerging directly from the bulb. The leaves are smooth, glossy, and bright green, with a fleshy texture. Unlike the native English Bluebell, the leaves of the Spanish Bluebell are generally wider and thicker.



Spanish Bluebell Leaf

Stems - Upright, unbranched flower stalk, typically reaching 30-50 cm in height. It is sturdy, smooth, and slightly fleshy. The stem is usually green, sometimes with a slight bluish tinge. Spanish Bluebell's stem remains upright, giving it a less drooping appearance. Unlike the arching stem of the native English Bluebell.



Spanish Bluebell Stem

Flowers - Typically pale blue, though pink and white varieties are also found. They hang loosely along one side of an upright flower stalk, with six petals that slightly flare outward, creating a more open appearance than the native English Bluebell. The stamens are the same colour as the petals, making them easy to distinguish.



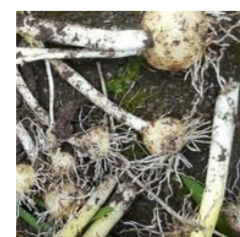
Spanish Bluebell Flower

Seeds - Small, black, and roughly spherical or slightly oval in shape. Seeds are contained within a three-lobed seed capsule that forms after the flowers have finished blooming. Each capsule can contain multiple seeds, which are dispersed close to the parent plant. The seeds are lightweight and can be spread further by wind or water.



Spanish Bluebell Seed Capsule

Roots - The plant grows from a rounded bulb, which has a brownish, papery outer layer. Thin, fibrous roots extend from the bulb.



Spanish Bluebell Root

N.B. This Species Identification Guide is intended to outline the key identification factors and treatment options only and should not be used as a definitive method for species ID. Legislation and its interpretation is constantly evolving. A variety of other IAPS may be encountered, which may require specific survey and mitigation. Please contact Japanese Knotweed Control Ltd (mail@jkc.ie) for the latest position & advice.

Habitat

Spanish Bluebells are typically found in gardens, parks, and cultivated areas in Ireland. They thrive in various soil types but prefer well-drained, moist soil and partial shade. It tolerants of a range of conditions, allowing them to naturalise and spread in the wild. The plant propagate through both seed and bulb division. The bulb can produce offsets that form new plants, while seeds disperse from the capsule, potentially spreading the plant to new areas. This ability to naturalise makes it particularly invasive where hybridisation with native species occurs.

The plant tolerates a range of soil types, including clay, loam, and sandy soils, as long as there is adequate moisture. However, it is less adapted to very dry or waterlogged conditions. The ability to thrive in various settings, combined with its resilience, allows the Spanish Bluebell to naturalise in the wild and potentially spread beyond intended planting sites.

Control & Management

Effective management requires a combination of herbicide application, mechanical removal, and careful monitoring, particularly in sensitive or protected areas.

Note: *Herbicide use near watercourses requires special permission from the local council or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).*

Chemical Control

Herbicide treatment (such as our Green Matters™ foam treatment) - is the most effective method, particularly when applied in late summer/early autumn when the plant is storing energy in its roots. If near watercourses, use only aquatic-approved herbicides to prevent contamination and consider mechanical removal method for sensitive areas. Maintain a buffer zone (at least 10 metres) and avoid herbicide run-off.

Growth Stage - Use appropriate herbicide formulations depending on the growth stage, example, in early growth (spring), full height (summer), flowering (late summer), or dying back (autumn/winter).

Mechanical Control

Excavation - mechanical removal can be effective and can be conducted all year round but must be done carefully to ensure all roots are removed.

S.O.S.™ - JKC soil screening service is an option to reduce costs. Screened soils can be re-used on site to minimising materials requiring disposal.

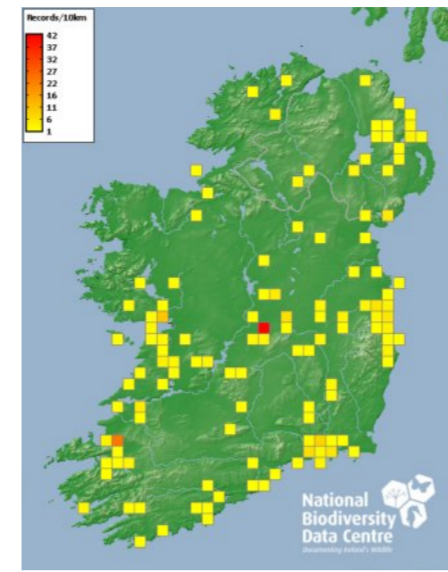
Manual Removal - For small infestations, manual removal of plants, including roots, can be effective. Ensure all root fragments and seeds are removed to prevent regrowth.

Treatment Bund - If there is space on the site, a treatment bund can be considered. Vector material should be placed in a prepared bund that is lined with root barrier and monitored / treated until new growth is completely suppressed.

Root Barriers - Barriers can be installed to prevent the spread of roots into adjacent properties. Installing root barriers can help contain the spread of roots, particularly near infrastructure or sensitive areas.

Herbicide Treatment Timetable for Spanish Bluebell

Month	Treatment	Herbicide Type	Herbicide Rate	Considerations
March - April	Early Growth Stage Foliar Application	Glyphosate-based herbicide (e.g., Roundup ProActive)	3-4 L/ha of 360g/L formulation	Apply when leaves are fully expanded but before flowering. Ensure full coverage of foliage, avoiding native bluebells. Repeat applications may be needed.
May - June	Mid-Growth Stage Foliar Application	Glyphosate or Triclopyr (e.g., Garlon 4)	Glyphosate: 4-5 L/ha; Triclopyr: 3-4 L/ha	Apply after flowering and before seed set. Use a surfactant to improve herbicide adherence on waxy leaves. Avoid spraying native bluebells.
July - August	Cut & Paint Method	Glyphosate or Triclopyr	10-15 ml of 360g/L solution per cut stem	Cut flowering stems close to the ground and immediately apply herbicide to the cut surface. Suitable for small patches near native bluebells.
September - October	Late Season Foliar Application	Glyphosate	4-5 L/ha	Apply to any regrowth or new shoots before dormancy. This is the most effective period for translocation to bulbs.
November - February	Physical Removal & Site Maintenance	N/A	N/A	Remove dead plants, bulbs, and any remaining debris. Monitor for regrowth and follow up as needed. Avoid soil disturbance to prevent bulb spread.



This map shows the current (2024) distribution of Spanish Bluebell in Ireland, recorded by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Reporting

Reporting sightings of invasive species in Ireland to the National Biodiversity Data Centre and/or the relevant local authority.

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/start-recording>

Monitoring and Maintenance

Regular monitoring of the site is essential, particularly after initial treatment or excavation. Plan for follow-up inspections of treated / excavated areas for at least 2-3 years to check for regrowth or new infestations.

Environmental Considerations

Herbicide Handling - Use PPE, including gloves, goggles, and long-sleeved clothing. Avoid skin and eye contact and inhalation. Follow all safety instructions on herbicide labels.

Herbicide Application Method - Use foliar spraying for large infestations and tmechanical removal method for smaller stands or in sensitive areas. Ensure accurate calibration of spraying equipment to avoid over-application.

Weather Conditions - Apply during calm, dry conditions to minimise drift. Avoid application during heavy rainfall or when rain is forecast within 6 hours to reduce run-off.

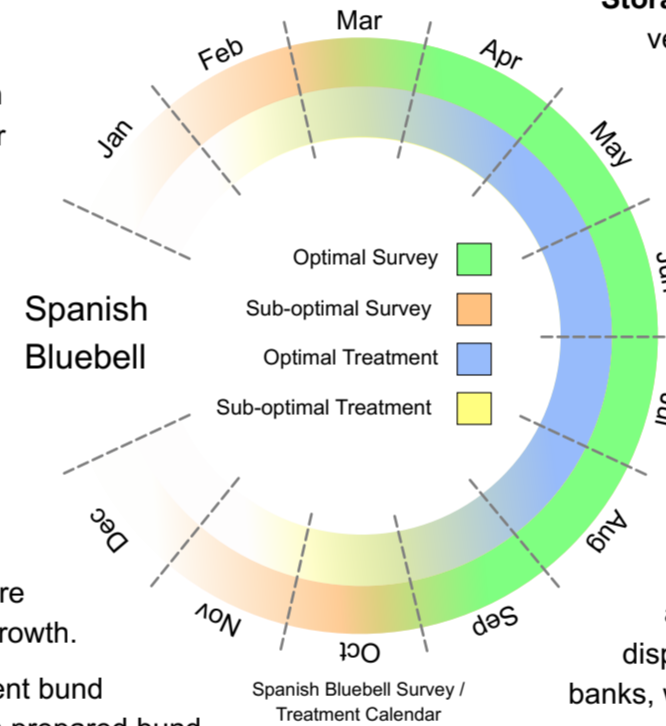
Storage & Disposal - Store herbicides securely in a dry, well-ventilated area away from water sources. Dispose of containers and unused herbicides according to local regulations to prevent environmental contamination.

Watercourses - Spanish Bluebell can spread easily along rivers and streams in Ireland, where water can carry seeds downstream.

Soil Movement - Soil movement or excavation might cause further spread, such as during construction projects.

Proximity to Infrastructure - Spanish Bluebell is often naturalised along roadsides, especially in shaded areas under trees or where soil has been disturbed for construction or maintenance. Due to its ability to spread from nearby gardens or through the dispersal of seeds, the Spanish Bluebell can colonise railway banks, where disturbed soil creates suitable conditions for growth.

Legal Requirements - Spanish Bluebell is not currently subject to specific legal restrictions or requirements under national legislation for invasive species control. However, there are general guidelines and best practices related to its management due to its potential to hybridise with the native English Bluebell, which can threaten native biodiversity.



Safety Protocols

Herbicide Handling - Use PPE, including gloves, goggles, face mask and long-sleeved clothing, Coveralls. Avoid skin and eye contact and inhalation.



Follow all safety instructions on herbicide labels. If the infestation is in a public area, signage may be required to warn the public and prevent soil disturbance.

On-site Biosecurity Measures

Prevent Spread - Avoid disturbing the plant unnecessarily, as seeds / root fragments can easily spread and establish new colonies. Remove and bag all cut material for proper disposal.

Equipment Cleanliness - Clean all tools, equipment, footwear, and clothing before leaving the site to prevent the spread of roots and plant material.

Transport of Plant Material - Transport all plant material in sealed containers to an authorised disposal site.

Do not compost or leave on-site, as this can lead to further spread.

Monitoring & Follow-Up - Regular monitoring of the site is essential, particularly after initial treatment or excavation.

Plan for follow-up inspections of treated / excavated areas for at least 2-3 years to check for regrowth or new infestations.

Follow-up treatments may be necessary for several years due to the persistent nature of the root system.

Long-Term Management

Site Rehabilitation - Following successful control, implement a long-term monitoring and rehabilitation plan to restore native vegetation and prevent reinvasion.

Re-vegetation - Replant treated areas with native species to restore ecological balance and prevent re-invasion by Spanish Bluebell.

Community Engagement - Engage local communities in identification and reporting of infestations. Educate on its ecological impacts and promote the use of native alternatives for landscaping.

For further information and free advice, please contact:
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