

Brazilian Giant-Rhubarb

(*Gunnera manicata*)



Habitat: Terrestrial. Found in sheltered areas where the ground is permanently moist, such as lake margins and stream sides.

Family name: Gunneraceae

Description:

A giant clump-forming perennial herb grows up to 3 metres in height and 4 metres wide.

The enormous leaves of the plant prevent other species from growing beneath them and colonies can suppress natural biodiversity and alter ecosystems.



During summer months, Brazilian giant rhubarb bears tiny flowers on large cone inflorescences, up to 1.2 m long, which are wind-pollinated.



Hundreds of densely packed small red-green rounded, slightly fleshy fruits containing a single seed follow and mature in the autumn. Each seed head can produce over 80,000 seeds.



Winter months:

In winter, leaves die back to expose large over winter buds and thick brown scaly rhizomes which are capable of producing new plants and regenerating from fragments if detached from the parent.

It is not known how long detached pieces of rhizome can survive.



Identification:

Brazilian giant rhubarb stalks and under-leaves have short bristles and spines



Brazilian Giant-Rhubarb - *Gunnera manicata* does not appear to develop the extensive and dense stands of *Gunnera tinctoria*.

However, the plant has a symbiotic relationship

with nitrogen-fixing cyanobacteria and this may confer an advantage to young plants growing in nitrogen-deficient soils.

There has been confusion in the past between true *Gunnera manicata* and closely related species including *Gunnera morae* and *Gunnera tinctoria*.



Brazilian Giant-rhubarb can block drains and streams, increasing the risk of local flooding.



It can be very difficult and costly to eradicate and become an economic burden to land-owners and management.

