INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES FACT SHEET

IPSAWG
Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group

Oriental Bittersweet

Celastrus orbiculatus

Pictures By (From Top to Bottom): L. J. Mehrhoff, J. H. Miller @ www.invasive.org and J. H. Miller @ www.invasive.org.

Invasive Plants are a Threat to:

- **Forests and wetlands**
- **Native plants**
- **Perennial gardens**
- **Wildlife**
- **Lakes and rivers**
- **Human Health**
- **Farmland**

Date Prepared: 1/05

Description:

Oriental bittersweet is a rapidly spreading deciduous, twining vine with alternate round, glossy leaves. The outer surface of its roots are characteristically bright orange. The branches are round, glabrous, light to dark brown, usually with noticeable lenticels. Small greenish flowers occur in clusters in the leaf axils. At maturity, globular, green to yellow fruits split open to reveal three red-orange, fleshy arils that contain the seeds. This species may be distinguished from the native *Celastrus scandens* by the location of its fruit. *C. orbiculatus* has small clusters in the leaf axils while *C. scandens* has clusters only at its branch tips.

Distribution:

Oriental bittersweet was brought to the United States for cultivation during the middle of the nineteenth century. It is now naturalized in 21 of the 33 states where it was introduced, a region extending from Maine south to Georgia and west to Iowa. In Indiana, it is locally abundant in the southern third of the state and in several counties in northwest Indiana.

Problem:

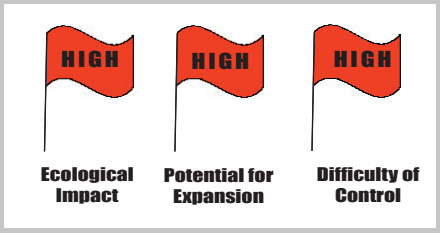
Oriental bittersweet can overrun natural vegetation, forming nearly pure stands in forests. It can strangle shrubs and small trees, and weaken mature trees by girdling the trunk and weighting the crown making the tree more susceptible to damage. There is also a concern that this species is hybridizing with American bittersweet and threatening to genetically eliminate the native species.

Origin:

Oriental bittersweet's habitat on its native continent of Asia is said to be lowland slopes or thickets at altitudes from 100 to 1,400 meters. The vine is widely distributed in northern and central Japan and Korea. In China it is found primarily in provinces north of the Yangtze River.

Picture By: The Nature Conservancy.

IPSAWG Ranking:



IPSAWG Recommendation:

- Do not buy, sell or plant Oriental bittersweet in Indiana
- Help by eradicating Oriental bittersweet on your property

This ranking illustrates the results of an assessment conducted by the **Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group** (IPSAWG), which is made up of many organizations and agencies concerned about invasive plant species. IPSAWG's goal is to assess which plant species may threaten natural areas in Indiana and develop recommendations for their use in the state.

For more information about IPSAWG and the assessment tool used to rank invasive species, visit their website:

www.invasivespecies.IN.gov

ALTERNATIVES
to Oriental Bittersweet:

Virgin's bower
(*Clematis virginiana*)

Trumpet Honeysuckle
(*Lonicera sempervirens*)

Woolly Dutchman's Pipe
(*Aristolochia tomentosa*)

Pictures By (Top to Bottom): D. Liebman, J. Lepore and S. Baskauf.

Other Alternatives:

Virgina Creeper
(*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
Crossvine
(*Bignonia capreolata*)

Not Recommended:

American bittersweet
(*Celastrus scandens*)
While American bittersweet is native and non-invasive, unfortunately, nurseries often mislabel Oriental bittersweet as American bittersweet. It is very difficult to find true American bittersweet for sale.

Control Methods:

Vines can be pulled out by the root and removed from the site. If fruits are present, they should be bagged and disposed of. Certain systemic herbicides, such as glyphosate or triclopyr, that are taken into the roots and kill the entire plant, have been used successfully.

When using glyphosate or triclopyr, cut the stem 5 cm. above ground level. Immediately apply a 25% solution of glyphosate or triclopyr to the cross-section of the stem. This procedure is effective at temperatures as low as 40°F. A subsequent foliar application may be necessary to control new seedlings. **Always read and follow pesticide label directions.**

Oriental bittersweet smothering native plants. (Picture By: The Nature Conservancy)

Eight Easy Ways to Combat Invasive Plants

You can **help stop** the spread of **invasive plants** by following these **8 easy guidelines**:

1. Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Request that nurseries and garden centers sell only non-invasive plants.
2. Seek information on invasive plants. Sources include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists, and government agencies.
3. Scout your property for invasive species, and remove invasives before they become a problem. If plants can't be removed, at least prevent them from going to seed.
4. Clean your boots before and after visiting a natural area to prevent the spread of invasive plant seeds.
5. Don't release aquarium plants into the wild.
6. Volunteer at local parks and natural areas to assist ongoing efforts to diminish the threat of invasive plants.
7. Help educate your community through personal contacts and in such settings as garden clubs and civic groups.
8. Support public policies and programs to control invasive plants.

For More Information:

On this assessment and IPSAWG:

IPSAWG
www.invasivespecies.IN.gov

On identification and control techniques:

The Nature Conservancy's Wildland Weeds
www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu

On native plant alternatives and sources:

Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society
www.inpaws.org