



Oriental Bittersweet *Celastrus orbiculatus* Thumb.



Common Names: Oriental, round-leaved and Asiatic bittersweet

Native Origin: Eastern Asia, Korea, China and Japan

Description: It is a deciduous, woody, perennial vine or trailing shrub. Light brown stems may reach 2 – 4 inches in diameter and up to 59 feet in length. Leaves (2-5 inch) are glossy, rounded, finely toothed and arranged alternately along the stem. Clusters of small whitish- greenish flowers emerge, May – June, from leaf axils, allowing each plant to produce large numbers of seeds. At maturity, globular, green to yellow fruits split open to reveal three red-orange, fleshy arils that contain the seeds. These showy fruits have made oriental bittersweet popular for use in floral arrangements. They reproduce by seed and vegetatively by root suckering.



Habitat: Oriental bittersweet infests forest edges, woodlands, early succession fields, hedgerows, coastal areas and salt marsh edges, particularly those suffering some form of land disturbance. While often found in more open, sunny sites, its tolerance for shade allows oriental bittersweet to invade forested areas.



Distribution: Oriental bittersweet currently occurs from New York to North Carolina, and westward to Illinois.

Ecological Impacts: Oriental bittersweet is an aggressive invader that threatens all vegetation levels of forested and open areas. It grows over other vegetation, completely covering it, and kills other plants by preventing photosynthesis, girdling, and uprooting by force of its massive weight. In the northeastern U.S., exotic Oriental bittersweet appears to be displacing the native climbing bittersweet, *Celastrus scandens*, which occurs in similar habitats, through competition and hybridization.

Control and Management:



Mechanical- hand pull by the roots and removed from the site, preferably before fruiting; if fruits are present, vines should be bagged and disposed of in a landfill, or left in the bags and allowed to bake in the sun long enough to kill the seeds.

Chemical- Herbicides, such as glyphosate (e.g., Roundup) or triclopyr (e.g., Garlon) are successful. These herbicides are taken into the roots and kill the entire plant.

References: <http://plants.usda.gov>, <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/>
Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide: An Ecological Perspective of Plant Invaders of Forests and Woodlands

