WEED of the MONTH

Oriental Bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*

ODNR Division of Forestry
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Oriental bittersweet is a deciduous climbing and woody vine that grows to 60 feet. The elliptical, rounded leaves are light green and alternate. The flowers are inconspicuous. The fruits are round and ripen to become yellow and split to reveal showy, scarlet berries that persist into winter. It closely resembles American bittersweet (C. scandens), but can be distinguished by a more rounded leaf shape and different orientation of the flowers and fruits. The oriental and American bittersweets are known to hybridize. Oriental bittersweet was introduced from China around 1860 as an ornamental.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

Oriental bittersweet is very common across the Appalachians around old home sites, fields and roadsides. Shade tolerance allows this vine to grow in forests as well. In the woods, it can encircle trees and girdles them. Vines can completely cover native vegetation, including large trees, smothering them.

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES

Oriental bittersweet infests forest edges, woods, fields, hedges and even coastal areas and marshes. Disturbed areas are most susceptible. Because it grows up trees, it threatens all levels of vegetation from trees to herbs.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Hand pull the roots preferably prior to late summer and fall, when the berries are forming. If fruits are present, they should be removed if possible. When heavy infestations exist in woodland areas, simply cut the vines and repeat for a few years. Herbicides may not be practical for this pest, but mild herbicides can be painted onto cut stems for absorption into roots. Follow label and Federal and State requirements.

USE PESTICIDES WISELY: ALWAYS READ THE ENTIRE PESTICIDE LABEL CAREFULLY, FOLLOW ALL MIXING AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND WEAR ALL RECOMMENDED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR AND CLOTHING. CONTACT YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL PESTICIDE USE REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

For information on how to identify and control Oriental Bittersweet or how to better manage your trees, contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry at 614-265-6366.