

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)



Key Identifiers:

- Deciduous, woody, twining perennial vine
- Leaves are glossy, rounded, finely toothed and arranged alternately along the stem
- Clusters of small greenish flowers emerge from leaf axils, later producing yellow fruits that split open red arils containing seeds
- Fruit matures in August – September
- Native bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) flowers at the tips rather than along the stems

Habitat:

- Oriental bittersweet infests forest edges, woodlands, early successional fields and areas of disturbed land. While often found in sunny sites, it's tolerance for shade allows the plant to invade forested areas

Methods of reproduction and dispersal:

- Reproduces prolifically by seed which is dispersed to new areas by birds
- Seeds germinate in late spring in partial to dense shade
- Expands vegetatively by stolons (above-ground stems) and rhizomes (underground stems), and through root suckering (the ability to send shoots up from the roots)

Management Approaches:

- It is best to begin management prior to the fruits maturing by August 1st
- Where practical, vines should be pulled up by the roots and removed from the area by hand. If fruits are present, vines should be bagged and disposed in a landfill or allowed to bake in the sun long enough to kill the seeds
- If hand removal is not feasible (i.e. large populations); vines should be cut twice; once at ground level and again as high as possible.
- Stems should be spot treated with Roundup immediately following cutting, preferably just after the last killing frost
- Cutting in early May/June and repeated cutting throughout the growing season will reduce plant vigor

Sources: Carole Bergmann, Montgomery County Department of Parks, Silver Springs, MD
Max Hutchinson, Natural Land Institute, Belknap, IL. [Vegetation Management Guideline. Round-leaved bittersweet](#)
Jil M. Swearingen, U.S. National Park Service, Washington, DC