

Invasive Species Alert

Oriental Bittersweet

(*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Established in Michigan

Identification:

- Woody, perennial vine that can climb up to 60 feet.
- Leaves are alternate, finely toothed and can vary in shape from oblong to round to tapered.
- Vines are multi-branched and range from brown to gray. New growth is green.
- Clusters of small, 5-petaled, greenish-yellow blossoms form in leaf axils in May or June.
- Clusters of round, green fruits mature to bright red when yellow outer membrane opens in fall.



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Habitat: Woodland edges, open forest areas, roadsides, old fields, grasslands and hedgerows.

Native Range: Japan, Korea, Eastern China

U.S. Distribution: Eastern half of the U.S.

Local Concern: Oriental bittersweet climbs and overtakes native trees and shrubs. Twining vines can girdle trunks and branches. Dense vines add weight to tree canopies, leading to breakage. Plants spread from roots and seeds that are widely dispersed by birds and wildlife.

Look-Alikes: Oriental bittersweet is similar to the native American bittersweet, a protected species in Michigan. American bittersweet has elliptical leaves and its fruits and flowers occur in a single clump at the end of a branch. Oriental bittersweet's leaves are rounded and fruits and flowers are spread along the stem.

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