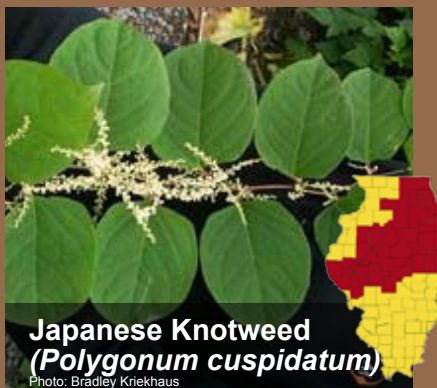


EXOTIC, INVASIVE PLANTS IN ILLINOIS HABITATS

WOODLAND : Forests, Timbers, Thickets, Groves, Windbreaks...



MAP KEY: ■ = Widespread ■ = Occasional / Rare ■ = Absent

For more information on invasive plants
visit the Illinois CAPS website at:
www.inhs.uiuc.edu/research/CAPS/



EXOTIC, INVASIVE PLANTS IN ILLINOIS WOODLANDS

Woodland habitats are dominated by trees that form a closed canopy and shade the areas below it. At one point in Illinois history, forest made up approximately 40% of the land, today it is around 12%. Much of this land has been cleared of its timber and converted to agriculture, urban, or other uses.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*, *L. maackii*): **Native to:** Asia and Western Europe. **Distribution:** Found in and around forest edges and within urban areas, once used as ornamentals and to improve wildlife habitat such as wind breaks and riparian buffers. **ID Keys:** Upright deciduous shrubs, 5 to 12' high. Older stems have shaggy bark and are often hollow. Leaves are opposite, simple, oval, with smooth margins. Flowers are white, red or pink. Fruits are red or yellow and found in pairs on leaf axils. **Importance:** Replace native forest shrubs and herbaceous plants by their invasive nature and early leaf-out. They shade out herbaceous ground cover and deplete soil moisture.

Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*): **Native to:** Asia. **Distribution:** Prefers open, disturbed areas such as roadsides, right-of-ways, forest edges and old fields. **ID Keys:** Climbing, deciduous vine capable of reaching lengths of over 100' long. Leaves are alternate, compound (with three, usually lobed leaflets), hairy and up to 5 1/2" long. Long, purple, fragrant flowers hang in clusters in the axils of the leaves. Fruit are brown, hairy, and flat seed pods. **Importance:** Fast growing plant. Kudzu often grows over, smothers and kills all other vegetation, including trees. Serves as a host for soybean rust.

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*): **Native to:** China. **Distribution:** Common in disturbed habitats, such as in cities, this tree can invade stream banks and open lands such as prairies. **ID Keys:** Deciduous tree can reach 80' or more in height. Has smooth stems with pale gray bark, and twigs that are light chestnut brown. All parts of the tree have an odor similar to cat urine or rotting peanuts or cashews. Leaves are alternate, large and compound, 1 to 4' long, composed of 11 to 25 lanceolate leaflets each 3 to 5" long. Large clusters of small greenish flowers are produced in June. **Importance:** Grows vigorously, establishing dense stands that displace native plants. It produces chemicals that kill or prevent other plants from growing in its vicinity.

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*): **Native to:** China, Japan, and Korea. **Distribution:** Found in disturbed areas, successional fields, pastures, roadsides, prairies, open woodlands, and forest edges. **ID Keys:** Medium to large shrub, often reaching heights of 20'. Leaves are alternate and oval in shape, approximately 1 to 3" long. The upper leaf surface is dark green to grayish-green in color, while the lower surface is covered with silvery white scales. Small, light yellow flowers bloom in late April and May. Flowers and fruits, when present, are found along twigs. The small fruits range in color from pink to red. **Importance:** Crowds out and displaces native species.

Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*): **Native to:** Europe. **Distribution:** Common buckthorn inhabits woodlands, savanna, prairies, and abandoned fields. **ID Keys:** Tall understory shrub or small tree up to 25' high with a spreading loosely branched crown, often multiple stems at the base. Common Buckthorn has egg-shaped leaves, pointed at the tip, smooth, dark, glossy and finely-toothed. Buds and leaves are sub-opposite. Twigs often end in sharp, stout thorns. Large round berry-like clusters of 1/4" black fruits ripen in late summer. **Importance:** Out-competes native plants for nutrients, light, and moisture. Degrades wildlife habitat. Serves as host to other pests, such as crown rust fungus and soybean aphid.

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*): **Native to:** Europe. **Distribution:** Upland to floodplain forests. **ID Keys:** Herbaceous biennial with weak single stems 12 to 36" high in its second and flowering year. Round, scallop-edged, dark green; first year, rosettes of 3 or 4 leaves; second year plants have alternate stem leaves. Leaves and stems smell like onion or garlic when crushed. **Importance:** Highly invasive plant decreases herbaceous cover and alters habitat for insects and wildlife.

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*): **Native to:** Eastern Asia. **Distribution:** Prefers full sun, will tolerate shade. Can be found in low lying areas, along waterways, utility right-of-ways, around old home sites. **ID Keys:** Shrub-like, arching herbaceous plant, over 10' high. Reddish-brown stems, smooth, stout hollow and swollen at the joint where the leaf meets the stem. Leaves are alternate, oval, and pointed at the tip, about 6" long, 3 to 4" wide. Greenish-white flowers with branched clusters which grow from leaf axils, near the end of stems, blooming in late summer. **Importance:** Spreads quickly, forming dense stands. Once established it is extremely persistent and is capable of sprouting through asphalt and foundations causing structural damage.

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*): **Native to:** China, Korea, and Japan. **Distribution:** Forest edges, in forest gaps, fence rows, old fields. **ID Keys:** Deciduous twining vine (older plants form trailing shrubs). Leaves are alternate, round, toothed, and glossy. Small greenish flowers occur in a cluster terminating the small branches, with terminal flowers blooming first. The green, round fruit is born in clusters of 1 to 3 in July and later becomes orange in color. **Importance:** Vines grow rapidly, overtops trees, cutting off light to the plants below and displaces native vegetation. It can also hybridize with American Bittersweet.

Chinese Yam/Cinnamon Vine (*Dioscorea batatas/Dioscorea oppositifolia*): **Native to:** China and India. **Distribution:** Found along streambanks and floodplain forests. **ID Keys:** Herbaceous plant with twining, climbing vine. The leaves resemble greenbrier leaves. Leaves are alternate or opposite, 8" long, wide, heart-shaped with prominent, parallel veins. Stems are round, thin and wiry. Aerial potato-like tubers are located at the leaf axils. The vine rarely flowers. **Importance:** Vines overgrow small shrubs and trees, blocking light to the ground altering habitat and outcompetes native vegetation. Severe infestations can even kill trees.

Japanese Hops (*Humulus japonicas*): Annual. **Native to:** Japan and Eastern Asia. **Distribution:** Found in isolated location in disturbed, open areas, abandoned fields. **ID Keys:** Climbing or trailing vine up to 35' long. Oppositely arranged simple leaves with palmate venation, 5 to 9 lobes, and deep V-shaped sinuses. Stems can be hairy. Downward pointed bracts occur at the base of the leaf petioles near the stem. Flowers are green and inconspicuous. **Importance:** Rapid growth rate resulting in a dense, almost solid stand that blocks light and outcompetes native vegetation.

Chocolate Vine/Five Leaf Akebia (*Akebia quinata*): **Native to:** Asia (China, Japan, Korea). **Distribution:** Forests, grasslands, can invade most any habitat. **ID Keys:** Twining vines are green when young, turning brown with age. Palmately compound leaves with up to five, 1 1/2 to 3" long, oval leaflets. Small, purple to red, flowers in mid-spring. Fruit are purple seed pods that contain white pulp and small black seeds. **Importance:** Climbs over understory trees and shrubs, blocking light to vegetation below and forming an impenetrable groundcover.

Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*): **Native to:** Southern Europe to Central and Western Asia. **Distribution:** Found in disturbed areas, successional fields, pastures, roadsides, prairies, open woodlands, and forest edges. **ID Keys:** Small, usually thorny shrub or small tree that can grow to 30' in height. Stems, buds, and leaves have a dense covering of silvery to rusty scales. Leaves are egg or lance-shaped, smooth margined, and alternate along the stem. Plants begin to flower and fruit when three years old. Highly aromatic, creamy yellow flowers appear in June and July and are later replaced by clusters of abundant silvery fruits. **Importance:** Crowds out and displaces native species due to ability to grow in shaded areas.

Invasive plants have the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside of their natural range. While some invasive plants tend to be more aggressive than others, it remains equally important to be able to correctly identify and manage the invasive plant before it begins to cause damage to the ecosystem, humans, or animals.

What can you do? Prevent establishment of invasive plants by using only native or non-invasive plants in the landscape. Learn to identify locally important invasive plants. Once they are identified, you can proceed by determining the best strategy for removal. Not all plants can be removed the same way, so be sure to ask questions on how to specifically remove the invasive plant you have. Replace the invasive plants with non-invasive and native plants to prevent re-establishment. Increased awareness of invasive plants will aid in slowing the spread.

Please visit our website at www.inhs.uiuc.edu/research/CAPS/ or email invasives@inhs.uiuc.edu for more information on invasives.