

Celastrus orbiculatus, Oriental Bittersweet

This plant is a common perennial vine that is often found on property edges, fields, woodlands, and roadsides. It can grow very rapidly, crowding out native species and outcompeting for resources. In addition, the weight of the vines can kill shrubs/trees by girdling and uprooting them.

Description: The leaves are alternate, appearing glossy and rounded with small toothed margins. The flowers are greenish, often growing from leaf axils and are quite small. The stem can reach up to 4 inches in diameter and often will climb up other vines of the same species or other species such as wild grape. The root of this plant is orange in color and branches out horizontally.

Control: Manual, mechanical, or chemical methods can be used to control bittersweet. The roots can be pulled out, the plant can be cut repeatedly, or treated with herbicides.

Look-alikes: Oriental bittersweet resembles the American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*), although the main distinction is that the American bittersweet has flowers/fruit at the end of branches, while *Celastrus orbiculatus* has flowers in the axils of the leaves. Some also mistake bittersweet for various grape (*Vitis spp.*) species, though grape has shaggy bark while bittersweet is smooth with lenticils.

Flower Time and Description: Bittersweet blooms from May to June with small greenish white flowers, forming in clusters of three to seven. Small pea-sized fruits emerge green at first, changing to yellow capsules which split open in the fall to reveal red berries.

