



Oriental Bittersweet Vine

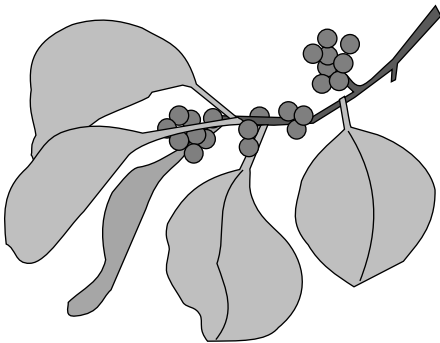
BVGC INVASIVE SPECIES FACT SHEET

Oriental bittersweet vine (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) can be found all over the United States and exists in almost every community in Massachusetts. Originally introduced in the 1860's as an ornamental and a tool against erosion, this highly invasive plant has the strength to choke out entire trees, cover fences and garden sheds, and destroy landscaping if ignored and left to thrive. Here is a guide to detection and extermination.

DESCRIPTION: Young bittersweet appears as a thin, green shoot and quickly matures into a woody vine with glossy, oval shaped leaves and orange berries in autumn. It can grow up to 90 feet long, with a base of up to 6-8 inches in diameter. Yellowish-orange berries appear in the fall, and split open to reveal a fleshy red interior.

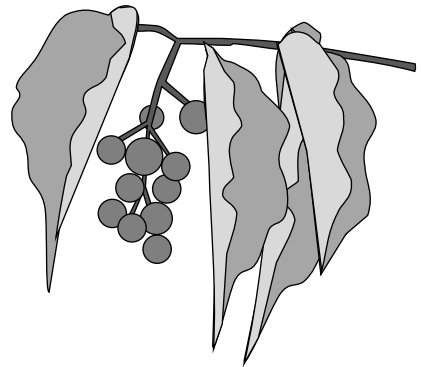
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

INVASIVE



berries on main stem
oval leaves

AMERICAN

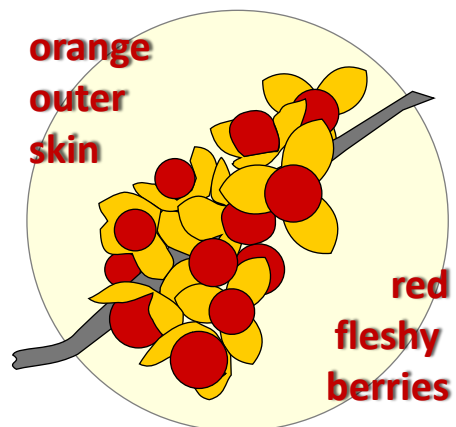


berries at tips
elliptical leaves

IDENTIFICATION: Oriental bittersweet looks like its non-invasive cousin, American bittersweet. To tell the difference between them, note that the berry clusters on the American bittersweet are located at the tips of the branches while the *Oriental bittersweet berries are found along the stem from the leaf axils.*

In addition, the leaves of American bittersweet are elliptical in shape (twice as long as they are wide) where invasive bittersweet leaves are more oval.

Look for orange berries located near the stem of invasive bittersweet vines starting in September.



Oriental Bittersweet Vine, continued

BEHAVIOR: Bittersweet *vine grows extremely quickly* and wraps its tendrils around anything in its path, like a boa constrictor, including house trim and fences. It invades fields and forests, eventually forming dense clusters that resemble a net. In extreme cases **it can uproot trees due to its weight.**

In addition to dense root systems that are difficult to kill, **the vine is continuously spread to new areas by birds and mammals that consume the berries.**

Ironically, its glossy features and malleable foliage make it desirable in wreaths and floral displays; improper disposal of these items can also spread the undesirable bittersweet.



If you find this plant on your property it is best to take immediate action

EXTERMINATION:

- Hand pulling will only work for very young vines.
- In fields, try repeated mowing to ensure shoots are not allowed to thrive.
- For large vines growing around trees, **sever them completely and remove a section.** Dead vines too large to remove can be safely left to decay.
- Expansive networks should be **consistently cut over several years** to be sure the vines are controlled. Check on growth each spring.

DISPOSAL: Carefully dispose of the bittersweet vines and root system by bagging them for trash removal. Vines can also be eliminated by burning in a brush pile. **Do not compost** as seeds or partial root systems will continue to grow.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Oriental Bittersweet is frequently found in areas regulated by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, and extermination may not be permissible.



HERBICIDES:



A systemic herbicide can be applied to freshly cut stems. Mass Audubon recommends a triclopyr-based herbicide, such as Garlon, to kill bittersweet vines, applied as a foliar spray.

Large stumps should be treated with herbicide or paint to stop regrowth from occurring.