



Invasive Species Leaflet



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Lonicera japonica (Japanese Honeysuckle)

Initial Introduction and Expansion in Range

Introduced to the United States in the early to mid-1800s as an ornamental plant, *Lonicera japonica* is native to East Asia, including Japan and Korea. It is still promoted by some



landscapes architects for its rapid growth and fragrant flowers that linger on the vine throughout most of the summer. Wildlife managers have promoted the plant as winter forage, particularly for deer. Still others are nostalgic about this plant, remembering the sweet nectar they enjoyed as children. *Lonicera japonica* is now found across the southern United States from California to New England and the Great Lakes Region.

Lonicera japonica spreads locally by long aboveground runners and underground rhizomes. The runners develop roots at the nodes (stem and

leaf junctions) so this plant often forms dense mats. Under high light conditions, the plants are able to flower and produce fruits that can be dispersed long distances primarily by birds.

Description and Biology

- Perennial trailing or twining vine. In North Carolina, it is considered semi-evergreen to evergreen.
- Young stems are slender, while older stems are hollow and up to 2 inches in diameter with brownish bark that peels in long strips.
- Oblong to oval shaped leaves are 1 to 2 and a half inches long arranged in opposite pairs along the stem. Mature leaves have smooth edges and young leaves are often lobed.
- White and pale yellow, trumpet-shaped flowers occur in pairs from between the leaves and bloom from late April to August.
- Small, nearly spherical, black fruits mature in autumn.
- Distinguished from North Carolina's 3 native species by the leaves near the tips of the vines. The leaves of *L. japonica* are distinctly separate. In our native species, the leaves are fused to form a single leaf through which the stem grows. In contrast to the red and orange fruits of native *Lonicera* spp., *L. japonica* has black fruits.



Habitats Susceptible to Invasion

Lonicera japonica thrives in a wide variety of habitats including all types of forests and fields. Dense infestations occur along forest margins, rights-of-way, and other disturbed lands. In forests, *L. japonica* vines spread both horizontally and vertically by climbing up the trunks of small trees (typically stems are less than 3 inches in diameter) and shrubs. These small trees and shrubs can be killed by girdling or by dense growths that overtop and eventually kill the plants by blocking sunlight from the leaves.

Prevention and Control

Small infestations of *L. japonica* can be pulled by hand. Monitor to remove any re-sprouts. Care should be taken to bag and remove the plants, including mature fruits to prevent re-establishment. Large infestations of *L. japonica* will usually require a combination of cut stump and foliar herbicide treatments. Where vines have grown into the tree canopy, cut each stem as close to the ground as possible. Treat the freshly cut surface of the rooted stem with a 25 percent solution of glyphosate or triclopyr. Remove the twining vines to prevent them from girdling and killing desirable vegetation. Groundcovers of *L. japonica* can be treated with a foliar solution of 2 percent glyphosate or triclopyr plus a 0.5 percent non-ionic surfactant to thoroughly wet all of the leaves.

As long as healthy green leaves are present at application time and temperatures are above 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit for several days, *L. japonica* can be treated any time of year. Repeated treatments will likely be necessary for complete control.

THE LABEL IS THE LAW!

WHEN USING ANY PESTICIDE, FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS

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