

Honeysuckle

Invasive Plant Fact Sheet

DESCRIPTION

Japanese honeysuckle is an aggressive invasive woody vine that climbs, suffocates, and strangles other plants. Vines can grow 80-120 ft. Deciduous in colder climates; evergreen in moderate to warmer areas.

In Medford, residents should be aware of a few different types of invasive honeysuckle:

- Vine: Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)
- Shrubs: Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*), Tatarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tataric*) and hybrid Bell's Honeysuckle (*Lonicera x bella*)

WHY IS IT BAD?

- Steals natural sunlight and nutrients and chokes out native plantings.
- Creates soil erosion.
- Releases toxins and can stop other plants from growing nearby
- Boosts ticks and diseases.

INVASIVE IDENTIFICATION

- **LEAVES: Opposite**, ovate, 1.5-3 in long. Slightly glossy on upper sides of leaf, slightly hairy on underside. Margins are untoothed.
- **STEMS:** Juvenile stems are reddish. Stems and petioles are variably pubescent (fuzzy). Older stems are hollow and brown, with bark that peels in strips. Stems can grow up to 2 in. thick.
- **FLOWERS: Tubular and bi-lobed** (4 of the 5 petals are joined for most of their length above the flower tube). Occur in June-July. **Flowers are fragrant, white, fading to yellow, and paired at the leaf axis** (where leaf stem attaches to vine). Each pair of leaves has 2 flower stems, with 2 flowers each.
- **FRUITS: Berries are dark purple to black.** Fruiting occurs in September through November; fruits can persist through the winter. Each fruit is 2-3 mm wide and contains 2-3 seeds.

Morrow's honeysuckle
shrub with berries



Japanese honeysuckle
vine with flowers



DISTRIBUTION & SPREAD

Japanese honeysuckle spreads by seed, which are eaten and dispersed by birds and small mammals. Vines also reproduce vegetatively via underground shoots (rhizomes), sprouts from the root crown, and aboveground runners that root at the nodes and can grow more than 10 ft/year.



To learn more about invasives in Medford, scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/02155Invasives>

CONTROL METHODS

Seedlings and small infestations may be hand-pulled. The entire root system must be removed to prevent regrowth.

Pulling and digging are preferable prior to fruit production. Digging is most effective when the soil is moist. Frequent monitoring and repeated removal are necessary. Periodic mowing may slow the plant's spread.

Chemical control methods such as a foliar spray, a cut stem treatment, and herbicides in late fall or winter may also be effective.

NATIVE HONEYSUCKLES

Native honeysuckle plants also appear in the area, making identification of the plant even more important. In addition to the identification tips on the front, the majority of the invasive honeysuckle species are fuzzy (pubescent), which helps differentiate them from the common native species.

Native honeysuckles to be aware of:

- Wild honeysuckle (*Lonicera dioica*) [uncommon in Eastern MA]
- Northern Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) [uncommon in Eastern MA]
- American Fly-Honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*) [uncommon in Eastern MA]
- Trumpet/Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) [common in Eastern MA]



Wild honeysuckle
flowers



Wild honeysuckle
vine



American
fly-honeysuckle



Northern bush
honeysuckle flower



Northern bush
honeysuckle



Trumpet/coral
honeysuckle

Images from <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

Keep Medford Beautiful is a community effort initiated by Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn to organize local volunteers to help clean up and beautify the city's streets and public spaces.

Learn more about the work we're doing and ways to get involved at www.medfordma.org/KMB or scan the QR code.



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