

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Shrub Honeysuckles

(Amur, Morrow's, Bells, Standish, and Tartarian)

Lonicera maackii, *L. morrowii*, *L. x bella*, *L. standishii*, and *L. tatarica*



Chuck Bargeron, University of Georgia,
www.bugwood.org

Description:

Nonnative bush honeysuckles grow to heights of six to 20 feet. Their stems are thornless with a hollow brown pith. Their leaves are opposite and egg-shaped. Their flowers, which bloom from May to June, are fragrant, tubular and less than an inch long. They range in color from white to yellow to pink to red. The berries are small and red or yellow.

Biology and Spread:

Nonnative bush honeysuckles produce large numbers of small fruits, particularly when growing in open sunlight. These are eaten by birds, which then spread the seeds in their droppings. Once a population establishes, vegetative sprouting continues the spread of these plants.

Background:

Shrub or bush honeysuckles were introduced to North America for use in landscaping, erosion control and wildlife cover. Unfortunately, these plants then spread throughout much of the country.

Range:

The nonnative bush honeysuckles are native to eastern Asia, Europe and Japan. Currently, they can be found in a variety of habitats from the Great Plains to southern New England, and south to Tennessee.



Leslie J. Merhoff, University of Connecticut,
www.bugwood.org

Ecological Threat:

These invasive species compete with native plants for sunlight, moisture and pollinators. And while birds eat the fruit, it is poorer in fats and nutrients than fruits from native plants, so the birds do not get enough nutrients to help sustain long flights during migrations.

Habitat:

Nonnative bush honeysuckles are relatively shade-intolerant, and often occur in disturbed woods or edges, roadsides and abandoned fields where more light is available. Morrow's and Bell's honeysuckles are capable of invading bogs, fens, lakeshores and sandplains.



Leslie J. Merhoff, University of Connecticut,
www.bugwood.org

How to Control this Species:

The two main methods of controlling nonnative bush honeysuckles are mechanical and chemical. Smaller populations can be removed by hand, making sure to include the roots. Larger populations should be cut to ground level at least once per year, in either early spring or late fall.

Glyphosate can be sprayed onto the leaves, or could also be applied to cut stems in order to kill the root system.

No biological controls are known that would target solely nonnative bush honeysuckle species. In open areas, prescribed fire may help to eradicate this species. In order to optimize this approach, however, the burn should be conducted prior to late summer in order to prevent seed dispersal.

Look-A-Likes:

Native bush honeysuckles exist throughout North America. The natives generally have solid stems, as opposed to the hollow pith of the invasive ones. Be very cautious when buying so-called “native” honeysuckles from a nursery or online.

Native Alternatives:

There are a large variety of shrub-sized, berry-producing, deciduous alternatives for landscaping purposes. These include species such as spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.) and chokeberry (*Aronia* spp.). These species will all provide food and cover for wildlife.



Photo: Jessica Sprajcar, DCNR



Photo: Chris Vans, River to River CWMA, www.forestryimages.org

References:

Invasive Exotic Plant Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers:

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/bush_honeysuckles.htm

University of Wisconsin, Invasive Plants of Wisconsin:

http://www.uwgb.edu/biodiversity/herbarium/invasive_species/ionxbe01.htm

Plant Conservation Alliance's Least Wanted List:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/loni1.htm>

University of Connecticut Plant Database:

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/index.html>

Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium: <http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=LONTAT>



Photo: Richard Webb, www.forestryimages.org