



Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Doublefile Viburnum

Viburnum plicatum Thunb.



Photo: Dow Gardens Archive, www.invasive.org

Background:

This native of Japan and China was brought to the U.S. as an ornamental landscape plant. Many cultivars are still sold in the nursery trade. Some cultivars of this shrub are known as “Japanese snowball” due to the white flower clusters.

Range:

The range of this species in the U.S. is not yet widespread. It can be found in scattered portions of the Mid-Atlantic (including PA) and New England, as well as Ohio, MI and OR.

Description:

This shrub can grow up to 10 feet tall; it is usually wider than it is tall. The horizontal branching gives it a rounded form. The simple, two to four-inch long deciduous leaves are arranged alternately along the branches. Leaves are dark green until the fall, when they turn a reddish purple color. White flowers up to four inches in diameter bloom in May and have no fragrance. Small egg-shaped fruits change from red to black in color in August.



Photo: Dow Gardens Archive, www.invasive.org

Habitat:

This plant can adapt to various soil types although it prefers moist, well-drained soil. It will grow in full sun to partial shade.

Biology and Spread:

Fruits grow in abundance along the length of the branches. Birds do love to eat the fruits, so they are a major vector for the spread of this species' seeds.

Ecological Threat:

Little is known about the exact impacts this species has on the environment but it is assumed to have the ability to take over forest edges and disturbed areas, replacing native shrubs and understory trees. The U.S. Forest Service ranks it of “local concern”, worth monitoring for possible invasive tendencies.



Photo: Jeff McMillian© USDA PLANTS Database

How to Control this Species:

Little research has specifically been aimed at controlling this species. However, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden suggests hand-pulling plants that are less than three feet tall.

Taller shrubs should be cut at ground level prior to fruiting, then apply a 20 percent solution of glyphosate herbicide to avoid re-sprouting.



Photo: Steve Karg, <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Look-A-Likes:

Mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) (top image) and possumhaw (*Viburnum nudum* L.) (bottom image) are native shrubs that could be confused with Japanese snowball.



Photo: Elmer Verhasselt, www.forestryimages.org



Photo: James Miller & Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, www.forestryimages.org

Native Alternatives:

There are a variety of native shrubs with attractive flowers, fall foliage and fruit for wildlife, including:

Common winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)



Photo: Dow Gardens Archive, www.forestryimages.org

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*)



Photo: John Byrd, Mississippi State U., www.forestryimages.org

Red chokeberry (*Photinia pyrifolia*)



Photo: Dow Gardens Archive, www.forestryimages.org

References:

Invasive Exotic Plant Pest Tutorial for Land Managers:
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/viburnum.htm>

University of Connecticut Plant Database:
<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/v/vibpli/vibpli1.html>

Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health:
<http://www.invasive.org>

