Invasive Species of the Month for January 2018

Knox County
Cooperative Invasive
Species Management Area

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)

Origin: East Asia

Interesting Fact: During warm winters, Japanese Honeysuckle will stay green, thus it is considered to be a semi-evergreen woody plant. Unfortunately, Japanese Honeysuckle is still frequent sold in the landscaping industry.

Description: Japanese Honeysuckle is a perennial woody vine that can form groundcover and can climb up large trees. Japanese Honeysuckle has small, opposite, semi-evergreen leaves that are usually entire (but can lobed as well).

Defining characteristics:

- Opposite leaves are semi-evergreen and can be lobed on young individuals.
- White tubular flowers that yellow with age, located in leaf axils.
- Black, round berries in the leaf axils.
- Twining growth form that can girdle small trees and shrubs.

(Left image) The twinging, climbing growth form of Japanese Honeysuckle.
(Center image) The white and yellow flowers of Japanese Honeysuckle.
(Right image) Japanese Honeysuckle's simple, opposite leaves and black berries.

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Habitat: Found along roadsides, disturbed woods, forest edges, forest openings, open fields, and hedgerows.

Japanese Honeysuckle still green even in the middle of winter.

Ecological threat: Japanese Honeysuckle can form a sprawling groundcover along wood edges and open areas, outcompeting native plants. Its vines will shade out small trees, shrubs, and over ground covers. Japanese Honeysuckle vines can also girdle small trees and shrubs, eventually killing them. Some wildlife do use different parts of Japanese Honeysuckle as a food source, and birds are the primary widespread vectors of Japanese Honeysuckle by dispersing its berries. Besides berry dispersal, Japanese Honeysuckle also spreads by rhizomes.

Control Methods:

- Manual: Most manual methods are not very effective for complete control, except for very small, young patches that can be pulled. Be careful when pulling because root fragments left in ground can resprout. Mowing can be used to limit climbing but can also lead to an increase in stem density.
- Chemical: Cut stump treating* large vines is effective but tedious for large patches. Dormant season foliar applications can be very effective and can minimize collateral damage to native plants. Using glyphosate (with a surfactant)* is very effective.

*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

References

Hilty, John. "Japanese Honeysuckle." *Illinois Wildflowers*, 20 Dec. 2017, http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/weeds/plants/jp_honeysuckle.htm. Accessed 4 Jan. 2018.

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