



## Invasive Species of the Month for November 2017

### **Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)**

**Origin:** China

**Interesting Fact:** Oriental Bittersweet is sometimes referred to as “the Kudzu of the North” because of its similar growth habits and ability to tolerate cold weather.

**Description:** Oriental Bittersweet is a perennial woody vine that has alternate, roundish leaves; small greenish-yellow flowers; and yellow capsules that open to reveal orange/red fruits.

**Defining characteristics:**

- Clusters of fruit located in the leaf axils (where leaf meets stem) all along the branches
- Variable shapes/sizes to leaves but generally roundish
- Vines can grow to be quite large with similar diameters to small trees.



(Left image) Oriental Bittersweet leaves and fruit.

(Center image) Oriental Bittersweet’s rough, slightly peeling bark.

(Right image) Close up of Bittersweet’s round leaves and lots of fruit along the branches



**Habitat:** Found along roadsides, forests, forest edges, and open fields.

Oriental Bittersweet  
overtaking some trees  
and shrubs just north of  
Vincennes.



**Ecological threat:** Oriental Bittersweet can climb over shrubs and trees and can smother or girdle them. It thrives in forest openings and edges but can survive low light conditions too. In addition, it hybridizes with American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) and threatens our native Bittersweet's genetic integrity. (American Bittersweet can be identified by its less rounded leaf shape and fruit that occur in clusters at the end of the branches, not throughout in the leaf axils.)

**Control Methods:**

- Manual: Cutting the vines close to the ground for consecutive years can control these vines. Young plants can be pulled.
- Chemical: Cut stump treating the large vines is effective. Use either glyphosate or triclopyr for this method\*. Or cutting and treating resprouts with a foliar application\* can be effective.

\*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

**References**

Kaufman, Sylvan R. and Wallace Kaufman. Invasive Plants. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012. Print. 518pp.