



Invasive Species of the Month for October 2019

Oriental Lady's Thumb (*Persicaria longisetata*)

Origin: SE Asia

Introduction: First discovered in 1910 in Pennsylvania, mechanism of arrival unknown

Interesting Fact: Smartweeds (*Polygonum/Persicaria* spp.) have historically been introduced/used for food, medicinal value, and ornamentally. Besides nonnative and invasive species, there are several native species of smartweeds, and species identification should be confirmed before control.

Description: Oriental Lady's Thumb is an herbaceous annual in the Knotweed Family that can grow up to 3 ft. tall. It has alternate leaves and flowering spikes of pink flowers that turn into small, triangular achenes when ripe.

Defining characteristics:

- Alternate leaves often with a chevron that looks like a thumbprint on the upper side
- Flowering, terminal spikes of pink flowers in late Summer to early Fall
- Hairs subtend the individual flowers
- Long, hair-like bristles at the leaf sheaths
- Fruit are triangular achenes



Left Images: Oriental Lady's Thumb flowers (note hairs).

Center Image: The stem and leaf sheath (note the long, hair-like bristles)

Right Images: An Oriental Lady's Thumb leaf with a faint chevron.

Botanical Terminology:

Achene – a type of dry fruit where the seed does not separate from its protective coat at maturity.



Habitat: Disturbed areas, right-of-ways, forests, forest edges, wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, lawns and gardens



Above Image: A dense patch of Oriental Lady's Thumb in bloom in Knox County.

Ecological threat: Oriental Lady's Thumb can form dense patches, which can inhibit native species. It is also adaptable to a range of environmental conditions including open and closed canopy sites as well as wet and dry conditions, making it able to invade a wide range of habitats. In addition, Oriental Lady's Thumb has been shown to adapt to new habitats since its introduction to North America, increasing its geographic and ecological range. Its seeds are fairly long lived and have been shown to last at least 5-6 years in the seed bank, making management difficult on established stands.

Control Methods:

- Manual: Pulling of young individuals can be effective. Mowing frequently may also be effective.
- Chemical: Probably the most effective method on large, dense patches. Foliar applications of herbicides with a 1% glyphosate* or 0.5% 2,4-D* solution should be effective.

*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

References

Kaufman, Sylvan R. and Wallace Kaufman. 2012. *Invasive Plants*. Stackpole Books.

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