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## Weed Alert!

*Cayratia japonica* (Thunb. ex Murray) Gagnep.  
(bushkiller, sorrel vine)

### Summary: new plant of unknown characters

*Cayratia japonica* is a perennial vine in the grape family (Vitaceae), and is native to a wide area of temperate and southeast Asia. It is occasionally cultivated as an ornamental in North America. *C. japonica* reproduces rapidly and prolifically, and can readily climb into trees and shrubs where it may block sunlight and even break the supporting trees with their weight. In North America, small populations of *C. japonica* have been reported from Texas and Louisiana (USDA NRCS, 1999), and represent a potential threat to native communities along the Gulf Coast (Duncan, 2001).

### Description:

(Click on thumbnail images for a closer view)



Leaves

Leaf detail

Flowers

Leaf surfaces

Invading plants

(Photographs compliments [Louisiana Ecosystems and Plant Identification: An Interactive Virtual Tour](#))

*Cayratia japonica* (Vitaceae - grape family) is a vine with glabrous, 5-foliolate leaves, which are generally 3 to 8 cm long and 1.5 to 4 cm broad. The leaflets are ovate to orbicular-ovate in shape, and bifid tendrils arise opposite from each leaf along the stem. The inflorescences are 6 to 10 cm long corymbs or umbels, and the flowers are small and salmon-colored, with a distinctive cup-shaped disc. The sepals are obscure, the petals are ovate, and there are 4 anthers. The fruits are rounded 2 to 4-seeded berries, and seeds are triangular in shape (Editorial Committee, 1993).

### Scientific and Common Names:

Synonyms of *C. japonica* include: *Causonis japonica* (Thunb. ex Murray) Raf., *Cissus japonica* (Thunb. ex Murray) Willd., *Cissus tenuifolia* F. Heyne ex Planch., *Columella japonica* (Thunb. ex Murray) Merr., *Vitis japonica* Thunb. ex Murray, *Vitis leucocarpa* Hayata, and *Vitis tenuifolia* (F. Heyne ex Planch.) Laws in Hook.f. (TROPICOS, 2001). The common name "bushkiller" signifies its ability to kill other plants by blocking out sunlight and weighing them down.

### Impacts:

The overall consequences of this new invader are unknown. Immediate impacts include the ability of *C. japonica* to kill the plant it grows upon, by stressing it with its weight, blocking out sunlight (Brown, 1992), or competing for other resources. It is not known if *C. japonica* can act as a ladder fuel.

### Native Range:

*C. japonica* is native to temperate-subtropical Asia. It has been reported from Japan, southern China, Indo-China, the Philippines, Taiwan, New Guinea, and Queensland (Shinners, 1964; Hsu & Kuoh, 1999; TROPICOS, 2001; Thomas, 2002).

### Range As An Invader:

In North America, *C. japonica* is currently reported from only Louisiana and Texas (USDA NRCS, 1999). It generally occurs in damp, deciduous river bottoms (Shinners, 1964), but has also been reported from developed and cultivated areas, such as the Mercer Arboretum in Houston, Texas, and possibly the New Orleans Botanical Garden in Louisiana (Duncan, 2001). There are no reports of *C. japonica* invading outside of North America.

### Reproduction and Methods of Dispersal:

In its native range, *C. japonica* reproduces both by seed and vegetatively. In North America, however, it appears that *C. japonica* reproduces only vegetatively. Brown (1992) reported that the flowers of *C. japonica* seemed to fall off rather than set fruit in Texas. Pat Duncan (2001) states that *C. japonica* reproduces rapidly and prolifically, and should be eradicated before it becomes widespread.

### Control:

*C. japonica* is very difficult to remove once an infestation has become established. Little information is available on its control. Pat Duncan has tried to control it with herbicides at Mercer Botanic Garden in Texas, but has only been able to reduce cover of the infestation by 30% over three years. Digging, or wrenching it out of the ground may be an option, but since it reproduces vegetatively, caution should be used to remove all stem and root fragments to prevent resprouts.

### References:

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--Mandy Tu/Wildland Invasive Species Team; March 2001