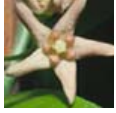




# Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

## Catalog of Species Search Results



[:: Catalog of Species Search](#)



## *Solanum dulcamara*

(Bittersweet nightshade  
Climbing nightshade  
European bittersweet  
Woody nightshade  
Fellenwort )

[Common Name\(s\)](#) | [Full Scientific Name](#) | [Family Name Common](#) | [Family Scientific Name](#) | [Images](#) | [Synonyms](#) | [Description](#) | [Similar Species](#) | [Reproductive/Dispersal Mechanisms](#) | [Distribution](#) | [History of Introduction in New England](#) | [Habitats in New England](#) | [Threats](#) | [Early Warning Notes](#) | [Management Links](#) | [Documentation Needs](#) | [Additional Information](#) | [References](#) | [Data Retrieval](#) | [Maps of New England Plant Distribution](#)

### COMMON NAME

Bittersweet nightshade  
Climbing nightshade  
European bittersweet  
Woody nightshade  
Fellenwort

### FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Solanum dulcamara* L.

### FAMILY NAME COMMON

Nightshade family

### FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Solanaceae

### IMAGES



Habit



Flowers close-up



Fruit



Close-up of  
Fruits



Incursion



White Flower  
Form

## NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

**Synonyms:** None

## DESCRIPTION

### Botanical Glossary

*Solanum dulcamara* is a perennial vine that can grow 1-3 m (3-10 ft.) in height. It grows from a rhizomatous root system. The stems of this plant start out green and can turn a dark red to black color. The stems are generally glabrous (although they can have hairs when young), hollow and can have a woody base. The alternately arranged, ovate leaves are dark green in color and can have a purplish tinge. Some of the leaves are deeply 3-lobed or even divided, while others are simple. In the 3-lobed leaves, the terminal lobe is much larger than the 2 opposite lobes at the base and has an acute apex. The leaves measure 2.5-8 cm (1-3 in.) in length and are 1.5-5 cm (0.5-2 in.) in width. They have an unpleasant odor when crushed.

The flowers of *Solanum dulcamara* are arranged in cymes. These cymes are positioned opposite the leaves. The peduncle measures 1.5-4 cm (0.5-1.5 in.) long. There are usually 10-25 flowers in each inflorescence. The five petals are fused, blue violet (rarely white) in color and their bases are fused. Each of the petals has two shiny, dark green basal spots. The yellow anthers are fused together and emerge from the center of the flower. As the flowers open, their petals become reflexed. These flowers measure about 1.2 cm (0.5 in.) in width. *Solanum dulcamara* blooms between late May and September. The juicy berries are ovate in shape, start out green and ripen to bright red. They measure 8-11 mm (0.3-0.4 in.) in length. These fruits can persist on the plant after its leaves have fallen off, and contain many disc-shaped yellowish seeds.

Page References Bailey 869, Crow & Hellquist 276, Fernald 1253, Gleason & Cronquist 404, Holmgren 379, Magee & Ahles 902, Newcomb 328, Peterson & McKenny 324. See reference section below for full citations.

## SIMILAR SPECIES

*Solanum nigrum* L. (black nightshade)

*Solanum nigrum* is an annual and a generally "coarser" plant. It has white to very pale purple flowers and black fruit as compared to the purple flowers and red fruit of *S. dulcamara*. The range of *S.*

*nigrum* is more restricted in that it has only been reported from Maine (USDA Plants Database).

## REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

*Solanum dulcamara* can spread by means of either seed or vegetative reproduction. The fruits of this plant are dispersed by birds. Vegetative reproduction occurs when the nodes of prostrate stems come into contact with the soil and take root.

## DISTRIBUTION

This plant is native to most of Europe, North Africa and eastern Asia. It is distributed throughout most of the United States with the exception of extreme southern states such as Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama. This plant has been reported from all New England states.

## HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

The exact time of introduction of this plant into New England is unknown. It is known to have been cultivated in Europe since 1561. This plant was likely intentionally introduced into the United States from Europe as an ornamental or perhaps for medicinal reasons. It was becoming widespread by the late 1800s.

## HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Abandoned Field  
Agricultural Field  
Coastal Beach or Dune  
Early Successional Forest  
Edge  
Open Disturbed Area  
Pasture  
Railroad Right-of-Way  
Roadside  
Utility Right-of-Way  
Vacant Lot  
Yard or Garden

*Solanum dulcamara* is found in thickets, along hedgerows, edges of agricultural fields, on the banks of lakes and streams and other disturbed areas. Though it can succeed in fairly dry soil, it grows best in moist situations and can tolerate a fair amount of shade.

## THREATS

*Solanum dulcamara* is most often found in highly disturbed situations. However, there is a report of it from northern New Jersey (Sussex County) where a botanist found it on an undisturbed

and untilled island in Smartswood Lake. He stated: "it was a surprise to see *S. dulcamara* flourishing luxuriantly amongst the aboriginal vegetation." (Porte 1884).

The vines of these scrambling plants can pull down smaller native vegetation. The seedlings of this plant are tolerant of low-light conditions, allowing it to move into areas away from the edges. The fruit and leaves of this plant are toxic, making it a threat to some animals and people. This plant is also an alternate host for the Colorado potato beetle which threatens other solanaceous crops.

## DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

Documentation required: Picture of the leaves with flowers or fruits.  
Best time for documentation: Summer, fall.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Integrated Taxonomic Information System

Taxonomic information about the species

PLANTS Database

General information and map

Ohio Perennial and Biennial Weed Guide

Good description and images

Virginia Tech Weed Identification Guide

Brief descriptions and images

Virginia Tech Dendrology

Brief description and images

GRIN database

General and distributional information

## REFERENCES

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## DATA RETRIEVAL

**Select a task by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."**

- Formatted display as table
- Export as comma-delimited text file

## MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

**Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."**

- The whole New England area
- One or more states
- One or more counties
- One or more towns (county sub-divisions)

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