

## Japanese honeysuckle - *Lonicera japonica*

### Identification

Japanese honeysuckle is an evergreen to semi-evergreen vine that can be found either trailing along the ground or climbing to heights of over 80 feet. Vines are slender, woody, and become fissured with age. It has opposite, oval shaped leaves that are entire to slightly lobed and 1 to 2.5 inches long (Figure 50). Showy, fragrant, tubular flowers that are whitish-pink to yellow in color give way to small green berries that turn black when ripened (Figure 51).

### Habitat and Distribution

A native of eastern Asia, Japanese honeysuckle was first introduced into America in 1806 in Long Island, NY and since has been planted widely throughout the United States as an ornamental, for erosion control, and for wildlife habitat (deer forage). It is the most common invasive plant in the southeastern United States forests. It invades a wide variety of habitats including forest floors, forest edges, shrub and small tree canopies, floodplains, roadsides, rights-of-way, fence rows, old fields, wetlands, and disturbed areas (Figure 52). Japanese honeysuckle can thrive under a mature, closed forest canopy, but is most prolific along edges and in openings (Figure 53). It currently occurs in at least 38 states and is abundantly found throughout the Southeast.

### Impact

The long growing season, due to its evergreen tendencies, helps Japanese honeysuckle compete successfully with many native species for both above and below ground resources. It can girdle shrubs and small saplings by twining around them and can form dense mats in the canopies of shrubs and trees, shading everything below. Japanese honeysuckle can also form dense thickets on the forest floor, inhibiting growth of native understory species and establishment of tree seedlings. Forest canopy gaps can be quickly invaded and closed in and forest edges can grow into a “living wall” of vegetation. Forest regeneration is difficult in infested areas, because of the reduced growth and survivorship of seedlings caused by Japanese honeysuckle.



Figure 50



Figure 51

### Response to Disturbance

Promoted by high light  
 Promoted by soil disturbance  
 Sprouts vigorously after cutting or fire  
 Most successful in early successional stages  
 with small diameter vertical structure  
 Thinning activities stimulate growth  
 Seeds and re-sprouts can vigorously grow  
 after site-prep or clear cutting activities, to  
 the point of out-competing the trees.  
 Fast growth in a single season if conditions  
 are favorable  
 Remains at low densities in mature forest until  
 clearing or thinning, when it spread rapidly  
 Evergreen (somewhat semi-evergreen)  
 Cold tolerant

### Reproduction

Primary means – Asexual and seed  
 High seed production (222 g seeds/plant)  
 Seed bank potential very low (less than one year)  
 High seed viability (85%) and germination  
 rates (63%)  
 Insect and hummingbird pollinated  
 Perennial

### Seed Dispersal

Bird and animal dispersed seed  
 Readily eaten by deer

### Growth Habits

Vine  
 Shade tolerant  
 Flood tolerant  
 Drought tolerant  
 Can grow in varied habitat types

### Response to Prescribed Fire

Not a control option (returns to pre-burn  
 levels within a few years)  
 Not a fire hazard  
 Rapid re-growth after fire



Figure 52



Figure 53

### Control Recommendations

Apply Escort XP with a surfactant to foliage June to August—either by broadcast spraying 2 ounces per acre in water (0.6 dry ounces per 3-gallon mix - and apply a total of 10 gallons of spray mix per acre) or by spot spraying 2 to 4 ounces per acre in water (0.6 to 1.2 dry ounces per 3-gallon mix).

Or, treat foliage with one of the following herbicides in water with a surfactant (July to October or during warm days in early winter) keeping spray away from desirable plants: a glyphosate herbicide as a 2-percent solution (8 ounces per 3-gallon mix) or Garlon 3A or Garlon 4 as a 3- to 5-percent solution (12 to 20 ounces per 3-gallon mix).

Or, cut large vines just above the soil surface and immediately treat the freshly cut stem with a glyphosate herbicide or Garlon 3A as a 20-percent solution (2.5 quarts per 3-gallon sprayer) in water with a surfactant July to October (safe to surrounding plants).

Prescribed burning in spring will reduce dense ground mats and sever climbing vines for more effective herbicide treatments to resprouting vines.

(See **Herbicide Quick Reference page 40-42**)