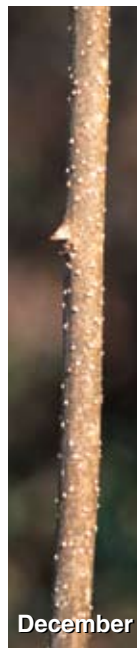
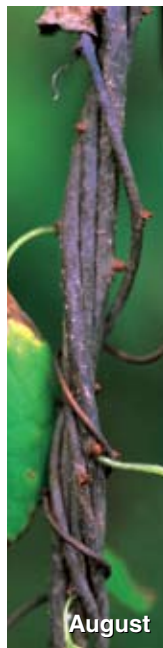
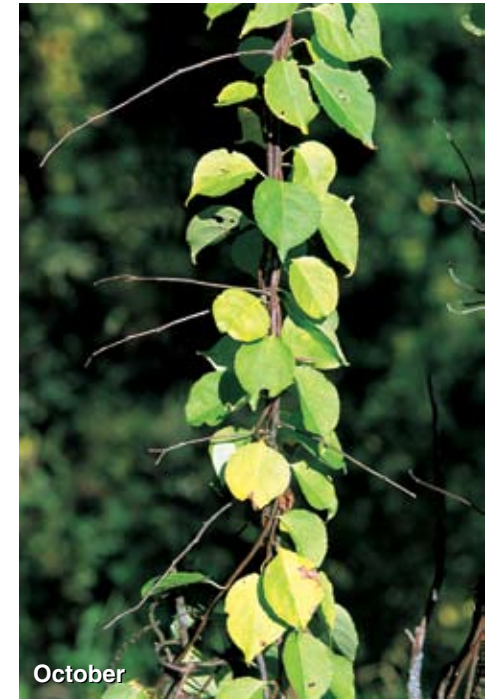


# Oriental Bittersweet

VINES



***Celastrus orbiculatus* Thunb. CEOR7**

Synonym: Asian bittersweet

**Plant.** Deciduous, twining and climbing woody vine to 60 feet (20 m) in tree crowns, forming thicket and arbor infestations. Elliptic to rounded leaves, axillary dangling clusters of inconspicuous yellowish flowers in spring, and green spherical fruit that split to reveal three-parted showy scarlet berries in winter.

**Stem.** Woody vine to 4 inches (10 cm) diameter, twining and arbor forming, with many alternate drooping branches growing at angles and eventually becoming straight. Olive drab with many raised whitish corky dots (lenticels) becoming tan to gray. Branch scars of fruit clusters semicircular, each with a tiny corky shelf projection.

**Leaves.** Alternate, 1.2 to 5 inches (3 to 12 cm) long. Variable shaped, long tapering tipped when young becoming larger and round tipped when mature. Margins finely blunt toothed. Dark green becoming bright yellow in late summer to fall. Base tapering into 0.4- to 1.2-inch (1- to 3-cm) petiole.

**Flowers.** May. Numerous tiny-branched axillary clusters (cymes), each with three to seven inconspicuous orange-yellow flowers. Five petals.

**Fruit and seeds.** August to January. Dangling clusters of spherical 0.5-inch (1.2-cm) capsules, tipped with a persistent pistil. Green turning yellow orange then tan. In winter, splitting and folding upward to reveal three fleshy scarlet sections, each containing two white seeds. Persistent in winter at most leaf axils.

**Ecology.** Occurs on a wide range of sites mainly along forest edges. Found as scattered plants to extensive infestations in forest openings, margins, and roadsides as well as in meadows. Shade tolerant but densest infestations along forest edges and in openings. Colonizes by prolific vine growth and seedlings, and spreads by bird- and other animal-dispersed seeds and humans collecting decorative fruit-bearing vines.

**Resembles** American bittersweet, *C. scandens* L., which has only terminal flowers and fruit, and leaves usually twice as large but absent among the flowers and fruit. Hybridization suspected between the two species. **Also resembles** grape vines, *Vitis* spp., in winter, but can be distinguished by persistent scarlet fruit versus grapes.

**History and use.** Introduced from Asia in 1736. Very showy ornamental with berried vines that are traditionally collected as home decorations in winter, which promotes spread when discarded.

States with suspected infestations are shown in gray.

**Oriental Bittersweet****3026**