

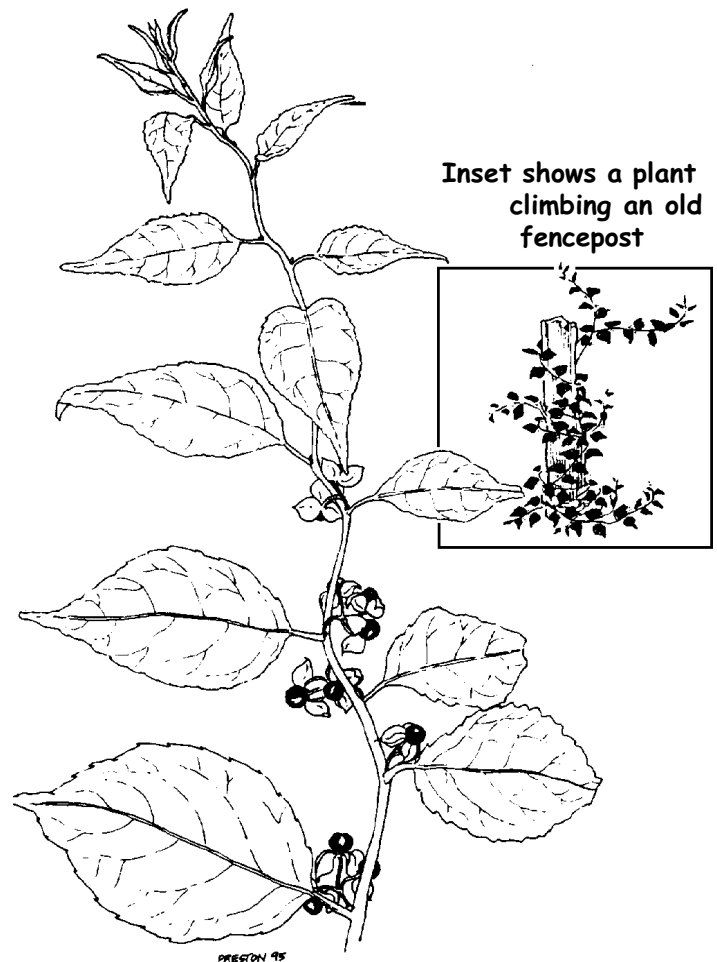
# Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant Fact Sheet

## Oriental Bittersweet *Celastrus orbiculatus* Thunb. Staff Tree Family Vermont Class B Noxious Weed

**Description:** Oriental bittersweet is a deciduous twining vine which climbs over rocks and plants, becoming a spreading trailing shrub as it matures. It has glossy, toothed, alternate leaves which turn golden yellow in the fall. Stems are round and brown. Small green flowers are clustered in the axils of leaves. The fruits, green at first, are yellow when mature and split open to reveal red seeds. Oriental bittersweet can be differentiated from the native bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) by its fruit: the native bittersweet has larger clusters that occur only at the end of stems, while Oriental bittersweet has three to seven clusters in the axils along the stem.

**Habitat:** Oriental bittersweet is successful in a wide range of habitats. It occurs along disturbed edges and corridors such as roadsides and fence rows, in abandoned fields, and in a variety of forest types, including undisturbed forest areas.

**Threats:** Oriental bittersweet is a highly invasive plant which entwines itself on other plants, shading out native vegetation. It also kills many of the plants it climbs, either by limiting the flow of fluids through the supporting plant, shading out the plant, or by making the plant more vulnerable to storms as a result of the added weight. Oriental bittersweet can spread quickly, as it has a high reproductive rate and the ability to grow shoots from its roots (rootsuckering).



(Illustration by Judy Preston - The Nature Conservancy of Connecticut)

**Distribution:** Oriental bittersweet, native to eastern Asia, was introduced to America in the mid-19th century. It escaped cultivation and has spread from Louisiana to Maine. In Vermont, it occurs in the Champlain and lower Connecticut Valleys and Taconic Mountains. It has begun to spread into the Taconic Foothills, the Champlain Hills, along the Lamoille and Winooski River Valleys, and up the Connecticut River Valley.

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## Oriental Bittersweet Staff Tree Family (*Celastraceae*)

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**Control:** Small patches can be hand-pulled. Care should be used so that the root system is also removed to prevent resprouting. Low patches have been removed by cutting the vine and treating regrowth with a triclopyr herbicide. Control is more successful in taller patches when the cut stems are immediately painted with triclopyr or glyphosate. Oriental bittersweet has a substantial seedbank, so any control methods will need to be repeated for several years to be successful

### References:

- Dreyer, G. 1996. *Bittersweet*. Article in: *Weeds of the Global Garden*. Brooklyn Botanic Gardens Publications. Brooklyn, New York.
- Hutchinson, M. 1990. *Vegetation Management Guideline: Round-leaved Bittersweet*. 1(20). Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.
- Shepard, C. 1996. *Invasive Plant Information Sheet: Asiatic Bittersweet*. The Nature Conservancy of Connecticut, Middletown, Connecticut.



For more information about Vermont's invasive exotic plant species or if you would like to know how you can help, please contact:

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