



TORONTO MASTER GARDENER

INVASIVE PLANTS FACT SHEETS

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HONEYSUCKLE

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Photo: Helen Battersby

INVASIVE HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera* spp.)

WHAT ARE INVASIVE HONEYSUCKLES

Invasive honeysuckles are multi-stemmed woody shrubs or vines. There are a number of non-native honeysuckles which are invasive in Ontario including vining Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), and shrubby Amur honeysuckle (*L. maackii*), Morrow's honeysuckle (*L. morrowii*), Tatarian honeysuckle (*L. tatarica*), Bell's honeysuckle or showy honeysuckle (*L. x bella*), European fly honeysuckle/dwarf honeysuckle (*L. xylosteum*) and cultivars of these varieties. *L. tatarica*, *L. maackii*, *L. morrowii* and *L. x bella* (a hybrid of *L. morrowii*

and *L. tatarica* even more vigorous and invasive than its parents) are the most invasive of these honeysuckles. They have been planted extensively in Ontario gardens for generations as both hedges and specimen plants due to their height, attractive flowers, and tolerance for poor soil, drought and some shade. They range in height from about 8 feet to 18 feet.

WHY ARE INVASIVE HONEYSUCKLES A PROBLEM

Invasive honeysuckles outcompete and crowd out or shade out native plants. Invasive honeysuckles are a threat to several plant and animal species at risk including American columbo (*Frasera caroliniensis*), hoary mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*) drooping trillium (*Trillium flexipes*), spoon leaved moss (*Bryoandersonia illecebra*), Acadian flycatchers (*Empidonax virescens*), bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) and spotted turtles (*Clemmys guttata*). Where invasive honeysuckles have taken over the understory, they prevent forest regeneration and degrade wildlife habitat. They grow rapidly with high reproduction rates, and spread easily through their seeds, which are dropped by birds. Vining Japanese honeysuckle can also spread by layering. They also have allelopathic qualities that affect growth of native vegetation. Their seeds are considered less nutritious for birds than the seeds of native shrubs and their size disrupts nesting sites.

IDENTIFICATION

Japanese honeysuckle is a vine; the other invasive honeysuckles are shrubs. They otherwise resemble each other and have the following characteristics:

Leaves are simple and opposite with entire margins.

Flowers are tubular in shades of white or pale yellow to deep pink.

Stems are thornless with hollow brown pith (hollow may be small).

Fruit are berries that can persist for most of the winter.

Shrubby non-native honeysuckles are difficult to distinguish from each other and from the native honeysuckles, (native honeysuckles include *L. canadensis* (fly honeysuckle), *L. dioica* (limber honeysuckle), and *Diervilla lonicera* (northern bush honeysuckle)). In addition, non-native honeysuckles can hybridize with native honeysuckles and the offspring will be invasive but may not have all the parent's characteristics. The chief distinguishing features between the non-native shrubby honeysuckles and the native ones is that the natives have generally solid stems with a white center (pith) while the non-natives have hollow stems with brown pith. The non-native honeysuckles do tend to leaf out earlier and to retain their leaves longer than the natives.



Invasive Honeysuckle: Pith

MANAGEMENT FOR THE TORONTO GARDENER

Do not plant invasive honeysuckles. Honeysuckles are difficult to eradicate once mature. Due to a shallow root system, they can be hand pulled unless too large to do so. Larger plants may be dug up but they will resprout readily from any root fragments that remain. However, repeated cutting will eventually exhaust the plant's carbohydrate reserves. Dispose of all reproductive parts of the plant (roots, berries, flowers, all parts of vining plants) in sealed plastic bags in the garbage (landfill) not with yard waste.

If you see **invasive honeysuckle** or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or visit [EDDMapS Ontario](http://EDDMapS.Ontario) to report a sighting.

SIMILAR NATIVE PLANTS AND ALTERNATIVES

Northern bush honeysuckle is a shorter shrubby native plant that can do well in dry and shaded areas with poor soil. It has similar flowers to the exotics and there are several attractive cultivars of this plant available in garden centres. There are also other native honeysuckles, such as *L. canadensis*, *L. dioica* and *L. hirsuta*, though they may be more difficult to find.



NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE
(*Diervilla lonicera*)



Other attractive native shrubs which can be used as alternatives include:



NANNYBERRY
(*Viburnum lentago*)



NINEBARK

(*Physocarpus opulifolius* and its cultivars)

And for vining Japanese honeysuckle, native alternatives include:



VIRGINS BOWER CLEMATIS

(*Clematis virginiana*)



TRUMPET VINE

(*Campsis radicans* and its cultivars)

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PHOTO CREDIT

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