Exotic Bush Honeysuckles

Lonicera fragrantissima (fragrant honeysuckle), *L. maackii* (Amur honeysuckle), *L. morrowii* (Morrow's honeysuckle), *L. standishii* (Standish's honeysuckle), *L. tatarica* (Tartarian honeysuckle), *L. xylosteum* (European fly honeysuckle), *L.* X *bella* (hybrid, pretty honeysuckle) and possibly others
Honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae)

NATIVE RANGE

Eurasia (Japan, China, Korea, Manchuria, Turkey and southern Russia)

DESCRIPTION

Exotic bush honeysuckles are upright, generally deciduous shrubs that range from 6 to 15 feet in height. The 1-2 ½ inch, egg-shaped leaves are opposite along the stem and short-stalked. Older stems are often hollow. Pairs of fragrant, tubular flowers less than an inch long are borne along the stem in the leaf axils. Flower color varies from creamy white to pink or crimson in some varieties of Tartarian honeysuckle. Flowering generally occurs from early to late spring, but varies for each species and cultivar. The fruits are red to orange, many-seeded berries. Native bush honeysuckles may be confused with these exotic species and cultivars, so proper identification is necessary. Unlike the exotics, most of our native bush honeysuckles have solid stems.

ECOLOGICAL THREAT

Exotic bush honeysuckles can rapidly invade and overtake a site, forming a dense shrub layer that crowds and shades out native plant species. They alter habitats by decreasing light availability, by depleting soil moisture and nutrients, and possibly by releasing toxic chemicals that prevent other plant species from growing in the vicinity. Exotic bush honeysuckles may compete with native bush honeysuckles for pollinators, resulting in reduced seed set for native species. In addition, the fruits of exotic bush honeysuckles, while abundant and rich in carbohydrates, do not offer migrating birds the high-fat, nutrient-rich food sources needed for long flights, that are supplied by native plant species.

DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Amur, Tartarian, Morrow's, and pretty honeysuckle generally range from the central Great Plains to southern New England and south to Tennessee and North Carolina. The remaining species are sporadically distributed. The maps below from left to right are: *Lonicera fragrantissima*, *L. maackii*, *L. morrowii*, *L. standishii*, *L. tatarica*, *L. xylosteum*, *L.* X *bella*

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES

Exotic bush honeysuckles are relatively shade-intolerant and most often occur in forest edge, abandoned field, pasture, roadsides and other open, upland habitats. Woodlands, especially those that have been grazed or otherwise disturbed, may also be invaded by exotic bush honeysuckles. Morrow's honeysuckle and pretty honeysuckle have the greatest habitat breadth and are capable of invading bogs, fens, lakeshores, sandplains and other uncommon habitat types.

BACKGROUND

Exotic bush honeysuckles have been introduced for use as ornamentals, for wildlife cover and for soil erosion control.

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Open-grown exotic bush honeysuckles fruit prolifically and are highly attractive to birds. In the eastern United States, over twenty species of birds feed on the persistent fruits and widely disseminate seeds across the landscape. In established populations, vegetative sprouting also aids in the persistence of these exotic shrubs.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Mechanical and chemical methods are the primary means of control of exotic bush honeysuckles. No biological control agents are currently available for these plants and any potential agents that might be considered would have to be specific to the exotic species, for obvious reasons. Hand removal of seedlings or small plants may be useful for light infestations, but care should be taken not to disturb the soil any more than necessary. In shaded forest habitats, where exotic bush honeysuckles tend to be less resilient, repeated clippings to ground level, during the growing season, may result in high mortality. Clipping must be repeated at least once yearly because bush honeysuckles that are cut once and left to grow will often form stands that are more dense and productive than they were prior to cutting.

Seedlings of exotic bush honeysuckles can also be controlled by application of a systemic herbicide, like glyphosate (e.g., Roundup®), at a 1 percent solution, sprayed onto the foliage or applied by sponge. Well established stands of exotic bush honeysuckles are probably best managed by cutting the stems to ground level and painting or spraying the stumps with a slightly higher rate of glyphosate (2-3%).

Prescribed burning has shown some promise for exotic bush honeysuckles growing in open habitats. In all instances, control should be initiated prior to the seed dispersal period (late summer to early autumn) to minimize reinvasion of treated habitats.

USE PESTICIDES WISELY: Always read the entire pesticide label carefully, follow all mixing and application instructions and wear all recommended personal protective gear and clothing. Contact your state department of agriculture for any additional pesticide use requirements, restrictions or recommendations.

NOTICE: mention of pesticide products on this page does not constitute endorsement of any material.

CONTACTS

For more information on the management of exotic bush honeysuckles, please contact:

- Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council, http://www.tneppc.org/
- The Nature Conservancy - Pest Plant Abstracts, http://www.imapinvasives.org/GIST/ESA/
- Virginia Natural Heritage Program - Bush honeysuckles, http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/fslobe.pdf

SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE PLANTS

Many native plants make excellent substitutes for exotic bush honeysuckles for home landscaping and wildlife planting. In the eastern U.S., examples include spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), ink-berry (*Ilex glabra*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), red chokecherry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), and arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*). These species are readily available through commercial nurseries.

OTHER LINKS

- http://www.invasive.org/search/action.cfm?q=Lonicera%20fragrantissima
- http://www.invasive.org/search/action.cfm?q=Lonicera%20maackii
- http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=66
- http://www.invasive.org/search/action.cfm?q=Lonicera%20morrowii
- http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=67
- http://www.invasive.org/search/action.cfm?q=Lonicera%20tatarica
- http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=68
- http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=70
- http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=69

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PHOTOGRAPH

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