

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Oriental bittersweet is an aggressive, non-native woody vine found throughout Michigan. It can climb 60 feet or more into the forest canopy, where it blocks sunlight, adds substantial weight to branches, and coils tightly around trunks and limbs. This growth can deform, break, girdle, or eventually kill mature trees.

Identification

Alternate, rounded leaves with finely toothed edges. Small, greenish flowers

Round fruit capsules that turn bright yellow in fall, then split open to expose red, berry-like arils

Oriental bittersweet can be confused with native American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*).

American bittersweet: Flowers and fruit clusters occur primarily at the terminal ends of stems. Mature fruit capsules are orange to orange-red.

Oriental bittersweet: Flowers and fruit occur in small clusters in the leaf axils—where leaves meet the stem—along the length of the vine. Mature fruit capsules are distinctly yellow before opening.

Because the species can hybridize and identification is sometimes difficult, confirm the plant's identity before treatment.

Removal and Control

Treatment is often most practical in late summer, fall, or during suitable winter conditions. Avoid cut-stump treatment during periods of heavy spring sap flow, which may reduce herbicide uptake.

Manual removal - Hand-pull small seedlings when the soil is moist.

Remove the entire root crown and as much of the root system as possible.

Monitor the site because remaining roots can resprout.

Bag and dispose of fruiting material to avoid spreading seeds.

Do not use it for decorations or compost it unless the facility accepts invasive plants.

Cut-stump treatment - Cut the vine close to ground level.

Within a few minutes, apply a labeled systemic herbicide containing glyphosate or triclopyr to the freshly cut stump, concentrating on the living outer ring just inside the bark.

Use only the concentration and application method specified on the product label.

Herbicide formulations vary, so a universal "50% mixture" is not appropriate for every product.

Recheck the site and treat resprouts or seedlings as needed.

Safety Warning: Leave Upper Vines in Place

Do not pull hanging vines out of trees. Dead limbs, bark, or sections of vine may fall, and pulling can damage the host tree. Cut the vine near the ground and leave the upper portion in place to dry, deteriorate, and fall naturally. For large vines or hazardous trees, consult a certified arborist.

In Michigan, herbicides must be used according to their labels and should not be applied near water unless the product is specifically approved for aquatic use.



