

Technical Report



Wetland Flora

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Gene Silberhorn

Japanese Honeysuckle

Lonicera japonica Thunb.

Growth Habit and Diagnostic Characteristics

This ubiquitous, invasive, twining vine with opposite, simple deciduous or semi-evergreen leaves not only forms dense ground cover, but can reach up into shrubs and small trees. Fragrant white and pale yellow, long (to 3cm/1.2 in.), tubular flowers appear in pairs on new growth throughout most of the growing season. Black, fleshy, round berries (5mm/0.23 in. diameter) appear in late summer or fall and are often still attached in winter. The illustration was modeled from a live specimen in early December. The short petioled, elliptic to oblong leaves often remain attached and green throughout the winter months. Vines are usually smooth and often shiny when young. As the vines mature, the thin bark sheds and is rather shaggy. The native honeysuckle, coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) has red flowers and red berries, so there is no mistaking the two species. Coral honeysuckle seldom forms large colonies.

Distribution

L. japonica is a long established invasive vine that can be found in Eastern United States from the New England States to Florida and west to Texas.

Habitat

Japanese honeysuckle can be found in both uplands (particularly roadsides and abandoned fields) and wetlands. It is commonly found as ground cover in hardwood mineral flat wetlands or "winter wet woods" in the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain. Associated ground cover species may be round-leaved greenbriar (*Smilax rotundifolia*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), partridge berry (*Mitchella repens*) and netted chainfern (*Woodwardia areolata*) (Wetland Flora, November, 1995). Forested wetlands that were formally agricultural fields, as evidenced by old plow furrows, are often dominated by *L. japonica*.

Ecological Value/Benefits

As an invasive species, this aggressive vine frequently 'out-competes' native ground cover species and reduces biodiversity in many habitats. Despite being a problem species, deer readily browse the foliage in winter when other vegetation is dead and birds feed on the berries.

Wetland Indicator Status

According to the *Revision of the National List of Plant Species That Occur in Wetlands, 1997*, *Lonicera japonica* is classified as a **Facultative plant (FAC-)**. Facultative plants are "equally likely to occur in wetlands or non-wetlands (estimated probability 34%-66%)." The "negative sign indicates a frequency toward the lower end of the category (less frequently found in wetlands)."

Lonicera japonica Thunb.



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