

Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia

Bush Honeysuckles: Belle's honeysuckle (*Lonicera x bella* Zabel), Fragrant honeysuckle (*L. fragrantissima* Lindley & Pax), Amur honeysuckle (*L. mackii* (Rupr.) Maxim), Morrow's honeysuckle (*L. morrowi* A. Gray), Tatarian honeysuckle (*L. tatarica* L.), European fly honeysuckle (*L. xylosteum* L.)

Description

Bush honeysuckles are upright, generally deciduous shrubs that range from 6 to 16 feet in height. The opposite, simple leaves are usually oval to oblong in shape and range in length from 1 to 2.5 inches. Flowering occurs from May to June (February to April for fragrant honeysuckle) with the fragrant, tubular flowers borne in pairs. Flower color ranges from creamy-white in most species to pink or crimson in varieties of Tatarian honeysuckle. Whitish flowers become yellow with age. The fruit is a many-seeded, red to orange berry. Exotic bush honeysuckles can be confused with our Virginia native fly honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*), but this seldom-seen species is restricted to high elevation mountainous terrain. Consult an appropriate guidebook or a natural resource expert for proper identification.

Habitat

In Virginia bush honeysuckles occur most often along roadsides and in forest edges, pastures and abandoned fields. Grazed and disturbed woodlots may also be invaded by some bush honeysuckle species. Although bush honeysuckles are most common in upland habitats, Morrow's honeysuckle is known to invade fens, bogs and lakeshores in portions of the northeastern United States.

Distribution

The invasive bush honeysuckles in Virginia are natives of Europe, eastern Asia or Japan. Most species have been cultivated as ornamentals in the eastern United States since the mid-1800s. Also, some varieties

were developed and planted widely for wildlife food source. At present, bush honeysuckles are distributed locally in Virginia, particularly in northern and central regions, although their ranges appear to be expanding.

Threats

Bush honeysuckles can rapidly invade and overtake a site, forming a dense shrub layer that interferes with the life cycles of many native woody and herbaceous plants. Exotic bush honeysuckles can alter habitats they invade by decreasing light availability and depleting soil moisture and nutrients. Some species may also release chemicals into the soil that inhibit the growth of other plant species. The fruit of bush honeysuckles is fed upon by many kinds of



Morrow's honeysuckle (*L. morrowi*)

For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation or the Virginia Native Plant Society.



Department of Conservation & Recreation

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birds. The birds then spread the seed throughout the landscape.

Control

Light infestations may be cleared by hand with a shovel or grubbing hoe provided the entire root is removed. Severe infestations may be controlled by repeated treatments of cutting, burning or applying herbicide.

Brush cutting plants should be done during the growing season. Generally two cuts per year are recommended, one in early spring followed by one in the late summer or early autumn. Cuts made in the winter while the plant is dormant will only encourage vigorous resprouting.

The application of an herbicide is also an effective control method. Glyphosate herbicides are recom-

mended because they are biodegradable. They will begin to break down into harmless components on contact with the soil. A glyphosate herbicide may be applied to the leaves or freshly cut stumps late in the growing season. Timing is important to insure effectiveness. Application near the end of the growing season when the plant is transporting nutrients to its roots will result in the highest rate of kill.

In some areas, prescribed burning may be used to control bush honeysuckles. Burns conducted during the growing season will top-kill shrubs and inhibit new shoot production. These burns will favor warm-season grasses and perennial forbs increasing species diversity and productivity.

Treatment of any severely infested areas usually requires man-

agement for a period of three to five years to inhibit growth of new shoots and eradicate target plants. Consult a natural resource specialist or an agricultural extension agent for more information on these control methods.

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References

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Harvill, A. M., Jr., et al. 1992. Atlas of the Virginia Flora, 2nd ed. Virginia Botanical Associates, Farmville, Va.

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