

## Wild Grape (*Vitis spp.*) & Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus spp.*)

### WILD GRAPE:

There are four species of wild grape native to Wisconsin. The most common by far is riverbank grape (*Vitis riparia*), sometimes just called wild grape. It is a woody vine that rambles over shrubs and fencerows and can even climb into the tree canopy. Occasionally you will find summer grape (*V. aestivalis*). This species has a more variable leaf shape, with the underside of leaves being strongly whitened. Note that if you find a very aggressive grape-like woody vine, in may in-fact be porcelain berry, a new invasive species that must be aggressively eliminated.

Grapes certainly have value in the natural community. Their small, greenish-yellow flowers are very attractive to small bees. Their berries are a popular treat for songbirds, gamebirds and many mammals, including human foragers. Over 20 species of moth caterpillars feed on wild grape including the fascinating sphinx moths as do other insects, such as impressive grapevine beetle. These insects are then food for larger animals, making grapes an important cornerstone in the foundation of the ecosystem.

### VIRGINIA CREEPER:

A native woody vine in the grape family, Virginia creeper has compound, five-lobed leaves which radiate out from a central point. They have small green flowers that are typically pollinated by small solitary bees. They have black berries that are not as palatable to humans as grapes, but are still highly valued by wildlife. Nearly a dozen species of insects feed on the foliage, making Virginia creeper another important component of our ecological community.

Two species native to Wisconsin are commonly referred to as Virginia creeper and are generally not distinguished except by close examination. Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) has adhesive disks at the ends of the tendrils whereas thicket creeper (*P. inserta*) lacks adhesive disks, simply rambling among and over other vegetation.

### INDICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT:

These woody vines can become aggressive at times, especially in degraded woodlands, savannas and shrublands. In pre-settlement times, regular wildfires would have kept these species in check. In the absence of fire the vines can grow massive in size, smothering shrubs and ground layer vegetation, and even climbing into the tree canopy, shading out and harming their host trees. The thick vines also make it difficult to clear brush and sometimes even just move through natural areas.

### CONTROL METHODS:

**Organic:** Simply cutting the stem near the ground will kill the sprawling upper vines. Make sure they haven't re-rooted if they meet the ground elsewhere. They will resprout from the root, but cutting alone may be sufficient to suppress their impact, especially if prescribed fire will be used for further ecological management.

**Chemical:** We typically treat the cut stumps of aggressive individuals with concentrated mixture of herbicide such as glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) or an oil-based solution of triclopyr (Garlon® 4, Brush-B-Gone®) to prevent resprouts.

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Pesky  
Native



wild grape



Virginia creeper