

Japanese Hops (*Humulus japonicus*)

DESCRIPTION:

Japanese hops was introduced to North America as an ornamental and medicinal plant in the mid to late 1800's. However, in recent years this fast growing annual, or short lived perennial vine has shown that it can be an aggressive invader. It has only recently invaded the Midwest. Since it is a new invader you should report any sightings of this plant to the DNR (see: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/report.html>). It is most problematic in moist areas such as stream sides, lakes shores and ditches. Every measure should be taken to control this invasive species now while the population levels are fairly low.

Japanese hops has leaves that are superficially similar to those of maples or Virginia Creeper with five to seven lobes and small teeth along the margins. The late-summer flowers are small and green, growing in clusters on long stalks. The most notable feature of Japanese Hops are the prickly stems which can grab clothes and tear bare skin, with an effect similar to that of bedstraw. Care should be used when handling Japanese Hops since these prickles can cause skin irritation. Despite what a home-brewer might hope, this species is not useful for brewing beer. There is a species of hops, *Humulus lupulus*, native to the U.S. as well, however its leaves have no more than three lobes.

CONTROL METHODS:

Organic: Small populations will be most effectively removed by hand-pulling with the roots being dug out when necessary. This is most easily done in the spring. If the infestation is detected later in the growing season, cut or mow the plants down repeatedly to prevent them from flowering. Smothering with a tarp has also proven effective. This involves first mowing the plants to the ground, then laying a tarp over the whole patch and weighing it down with heavy objects, especially near the edges, to keep the tarp from blowing away.

Chemical: Larger populations can be treated with a foliar application of glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) or triclopyr (Garlon®, Weed-Be-Gone®, etc.). Herbicide treatment will be most effective when used while the plants are still young and small or during the flowering period. When using herbicides near wetlands an "aquatic approved" formulation herbicide should be used. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply herbicide according to the product label.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) is a herbaceous vine with lovely late-summer clusters of white flowers and interesting fluffy seedheads which persist into winter. Carrion flower (*Smilax lasioneura* & *S. herbacea*) has ovular leaves and berry clusters which often persist into winter and provide food for wildlife. Among woody vines there are more choices available. American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) has attractive bright orange and red berries which hang on the vine through winter providing landscape color and wildlife food. Both male and female plants should be planted together for cross-pollination and seed production.

Wild Cucumber (*Echinocystis lobata*) and Bur Cucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*) are two native annual vines that are similar in appearance and habitat to Japanese Hops, but can be differentiated by the fact that they climb via tendrils and lack the rough prickly stems. There is a native species of Common Hops (*Humulus lupulus*) which prefers moist habitats and is similar in appearance to Japanese Hops, though less aggressive.

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Exotic
Invasive

