

Vines: Friend or Foe?

Vines are not inherently bad, nor do they necessarily need to be removed. While exotic invasive vines can damage and even kill trees, our native vines are beneficial to wildlife. Learning how to tell these groups apart is the first step to deciding how to manage your habitat.

Invasive vines:

Non-native invasive vine species tend to twine around trunks or grow in evergreen mats that cover large portions of the tree. Both growth forms restrict the flow of water and nutrients through the tree, which can be fatal. Common invasive vines in our area include:

- Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
- Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)
- Asiatic Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*)
- English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- Creeping Euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei*)

Native vines:

Native vine species also climb trees, but they tend to drape over branches instead of twining around trunks and cause less harm. Native vines in our area include:

- Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
- Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron sp.*)
- Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*)
- Grape (*Vitis sp.*)

Management Options

- Hand pulling: Small vines, any time of year but easiest when the soil is moist.
- Mechanical removal: Vines can be cut down to a “treatable height” at any time of year. Be ready to treat resprouts.
- Cut stump: June-February, but late summer-fall is best.
- Foliar spray: June-August (or through winter for English Ivy and Japanese Honeysuckle)
- Basal-bark spray: June-February

For detailed recommendations, sign up for a free property visit at cliftoninstitute.org/property-visit or check out Blue Ridge PRISM: <https://blueridgeprism.org/factsheets>.



The Clifton Institute

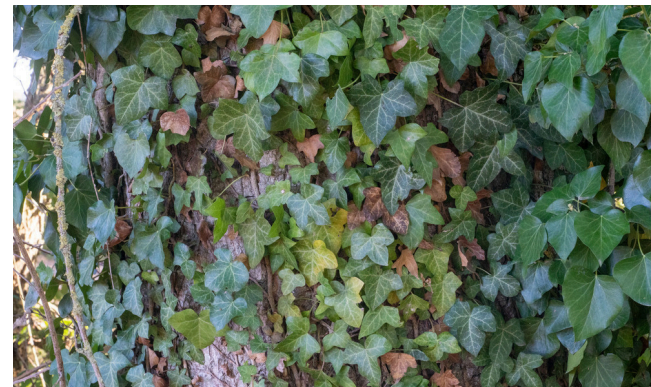


Photo by Jeff Davis.

Oriental Bittersweet can girdle trees.



Native grape vine has distinctly shaggy, brown bark.



English Ivy grows in mats that can damage bark.

Briars and Brambles

Like vines, thorn bushes don't always need to be removed. Shrubby thickets along fencerows and forest edges provide cover and resources for wildlife. And dense swaths of blackberries in fields provide critical habitat for Box Turtles and Northern Bobwhite. It's a good idea to make sure that brambles don't take over habitat, but leaving patches will help these declining species.

Invasive Thorn Bushes:

Wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*): Thrives in moist, rich soils along wetland edges and in open woodlands. Stems are reddish with fuzzy-looking spines. Fruits are bright red and delicious to both humans and birds, leading to rapid dispersal to new sites. *Best control method*: hand pulling

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*): Thrives in disturbed forests and fields. Stems have curved, claw-like spines. Smaller stems are green to red and larger canes are pale brown with vertical stripes. Our native roses lack the “eyelashes” (fringed stipules) at the base of each compound leaf and have straight spines. *Best control method*: cut-stump herbicide

Mile-a-Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*): Grows along disturbed forest edges, in wet meadows, and on sunny stream banks. Stems covered in tiny curved spines. Leaves are either triangular or rounded, the latter of which is pierced by its stem. This climbing annual vine quickly grows over native trees and shrubs. *Best control method*: hand pull or weed-eater in July

Native Thorn Bushes:

Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*): Grows in a variety of environments. Canes are purplish-red with a waxy, whitish coating. Black raspberries have a hollow center when picked (like a cap), while blackberries are solid all the way through.

Blackberry (Various *Rubus sp.*): There are both native and non-native blackberries, but they are very difficult to tell apart. Mowing can provide some control, but careful timing is needed to avoid crushing Box Turtles in the summer.

Greenbrier (*Smilax sp.*): Often grows in tall, dense swaths in young forests. Stems are greenish with long, straight spines and curling tendrils. Berries are blue-black with a whitish waxy coating. The berries and shoots of this thorny vine are an important food source for wildlife, including Black Bears!



Multiflora Rose has ‘eyelashes’ at the base of its leaves and recurved spines.



Mile-a-Minute has abundant, tiny spines on its stem.



Black Raspberry has waxy white stems.