

Bush Honeysuckle

It's pretty tough to know the name of every plant on your property. Instead, we seem to focus on the 'extremes'. If the plant has eye appeal, then we see it and appreciate it for the beauty it adds to the property because of its shape or color or what it provides for shade. On the other end of the spectrum are invasive or even noxious plants. They are the ones that we want to be sure and be able to identify so we can eradicate them before they get out of hand.

Bush honeysuckle is one of those plants that could very well fit in to both categories. Right now, this honeysuckle species is putting on a show with its bright green foliage color complemented by clusters of red berries around the stem. In fact, if you didn't understand how it grows and the damage it can provide in native woodlands, you might even take a quick glance at it and deem it pretty. Unfortunately, bush honeysuckle is anything but attractive. In fact, it has become a serious understory invasive plant across the Midwest, ending up on the noxious weed list in a number of states.

How can a honeysuckle be bad? While our native honeysuckles are vines (think Japanese honeysuckle for example), Bush honeysuckle is a woody species, and a very competitive one at that. Because it puts out leaves much earlier than other trees and shrubs, it's often noticeable early in the spring. The growing season is further lengthened by its ability to remain green much later in to the fall than most of our other woody species. This long growing season gives it a competitive advantage over other native species, and the vigorous growth can take over a woodland understory. When it does so, it reduces the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs. Why does that matter? If you want to promote native species on your property, then controlling bush honeysuckles is imperative.

If you don't have too many plants to eradicate, the seedlings can be readily hand pulled when soil is damp. Larger infestations will require a chemical control program. Foliar applications of glyphosate in late summer or early fall work well as do applications of Crossbow (2,4-D + triclopyr).

Cutting Bush honeysuckle results in vigorous resprouting. If cutting is your control program, the cut stump area must be treated. Effective treatments include Tordon RTU (picloram), or concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate. Basal bark spraying with some of our tradition products has even been a challenge, so make sure that any basal bark treatments include 2,4-D or picloram as well as an oil carrier is used to penetrate the bark. Cut stump and basal treatments can be done when the areas to be sprayed are dry and not frozen.

As with all herbicide product applications, the label is the law. Be sure to follow

all label instructions.