

Bush Honeysuckle Control in the Fall

While it often flies under the radar as an invasive species, Asian bush honeysuckle has become a big nuisance in many woodland stands, road ditches, and even some pastures – not to mention the landscapes where it likely got its start. Along the way, it's having a huge negative impact on wildlife habitat and forage production.

It's pretty easy to spot right now. Wild bush. Bright red berries clustered around the stem. Leaves are still a bright green color. Can range in height from six to 20 feet tall. Once a predominantly landscape shrub, it has spread far and wide, and has become a serious understory invasive from eastern Kansas to Ohio.

Why do they do so well here? For starters, they put out leaves much earlier than most other trees and shrubs, giving them a competitive advantage for resources to start the growing season. They also have leaves that stay green much later into the fall. This long growing season gives it a competitive advantage over other native species, and the vigorous growth can take over a woodland understory, reducing the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs.

If you are attempting to promote native tree species in your property, you will no doubt run in to bush honeysuckle as a 'weedy' species. Control will be important.

Honeysuckle seedlings can be readily hand pulled when the soil is damp, though the extensive growth system will likely make it overwhelming unless stands are just getting started. Chemical control is needed for larger infestations since cutting alone results in vigorous resprouting. Foliar applications of glyphosate (i.e., Roundup) in late summer and fall works well as does applications of Crossbow (2,4-D + triclopyr).

If cutting larger plants, treat cut stumps with concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate. Basal bark treatments with 2,4-D or picloram products work well, using an oil carrier to penetrate the bark while triclopyr containing products seem to struggle. Cut stump and basal treatments can be done when the areas to be sprayed are dry and not frozen. Always follow all label instructions when using pesticides.

For more information about identification as well as the chemical treatment options, check out Economical Control of Bush Honeysuckle available in your District Office or online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3222.pdf>

