

Pest Management – Invasive Plant Control

Shrub Honeysuckles – *Lonicera* sp.

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

NH-595



Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)



Tatarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)

Shrub Honeysuckles

The exotic shrub honeysuckles are increasingly common throughout much of the eastern and Midwestern United States where they have contributed to reduced species richness, cover of native herb communities and to reduced tree regeneration in early to mid-successional forests. Although disturbance of some kind usually precedes invasion, the exotic shrub honeysuckles are adapted to a wide variety of habitats. Reproduction is almost entirely by seed. Seed production and short-term seed viability are consistently high, and seeds are readily dispersed by birds and, perhaps, small mammals.

The exotic shrub honeysuckles also generally leaf-out earlier and retain their leaves longer than the native shrub honeysuckles. This trait, shared by many invasive shrubs, gives them a competitive advantage over native plants but also allows landowners to easily locate the invasive shrubs and determine their extent on a property.

Description

Exotic shrub honeysuckles are upright, multi-stemmed, oppositely branched, deciduous shrubs. The exotic honeysuckles have hollow center branches when mature (native honeysuckles do not). The opposite leaves are entire (un-toothed margins) and paired. Axillary flowers (where leaf is attached to

stem) are showy with white, pink, and sometimes aging to yellow corollas. The fruits of honeysuckles are usually red but can be yellow, orange or clear and fleshy. The flowers of exotic shrub honeysuckles can be distinguished from all native shrub honeysuckles except swamp fly-honeysuckle (*L. oblongifolia*) by their hirsute (hairy) styles.

Similar Natives

Some uncommon honeysuckles include *Lonicera villosa* and *Lonicera canadensis*, both can be distinguished by having solid white piths.

Control

The potential for large-scale restoration of unmanaged natural areas infested with honeysuckle is probably low. Restoration potential for managed natural areas infested with honeysuckle is probably moderate. If attacked during the early stages of colonization, the potential for successful management is high.

Manual, mechanical, environmental/cultural, and chemical methods are all useful to varying degrees in controlling honeysuckles. Removing or killing plants will provide increased light at the site which may lead to a surge of seedlings in the following year. Prepare to monitor and control these outbreaks.

Biological Control

There are no known biological controls of honeysuckle.

Mechanical Control

Mechanical controls include grubbing or pulling seedlings and mature shrubs, and repeated clipping of shrubs. Effective mechanical management requires a commitment to cut or pull plants at least twice a year for a period of three to five years. Cuttings should be done in the growing season (spring and fall).

Grubbing or pulling by hand (using a Weed Wrench or a similar tool) is appropriate for small populations or where herbicides cannot be used.

Any portions of the root system not removed can re-sprout. Because disturbed, open soil can support rapid re-invasion, managers must monitor their efforts at least once per year and repeat control measures as needed. Limit soil disturbance whenever possible. Winter clipping should be avoided as it encourages vigorous re-sprouting.

Prescribed Burning

Repeated annual prescribed burns during the growing season will top-kill shrubs and inhibit new shoot production.

Chemical Control

Most managers report that treatment with herbicides is necessary for large shrub honeysuckle populations. Scientific studies have shown that foliar, cut-stem and basal bark treatments have all been effective for control of honeysuckles^{1,2}. Treatments are most effective later in the growing season when the plant is transporting nutrients to its root system.

Refer to the pesticide label for complete instructions on the use and application of a given herbicide. Some applications, by rule, may only be done by a certified pesticide applicator, and/or might require the applicator hold a special permit. Private landowners can apply anything purchased at your local garden store with out having a permit so long as it is not near a water body or known public aquifer. You should contact the New Hampshire Division of Pesticide Control if there are any concerns before applying any pesticides.

¹ – From TNC ESA – Bush Honeysuckles

² – Tennessee Exotic Plant Management Manual

Disposal

Small, pulled shrubs should be hung in trees to prevent re-rooting. Larger, pulled shrubs may be piled or piled and burned, roots up, to prevent re-establishment. Cut stems may be piled or piled and burned. Chip once all fruit has dropped from branches. Leave resulting chips on site as buckthorns will spread by seeds.

Information and Recommendations compiled from:

- The Nature Conservancy - Element Stewardship Abstract (and references therein)
- Tennessee Exotic Plant Management Manual
- Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE)
- Virginia Natural Heritage Program – Invasive Plant Fact Sheets
- Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant Fact Sheets
- CT NRCS Invasive Species ID Sheets

CAUTION: The NH Division of Pesticide Control is the agency that regulates the sale and use of pesticides in New Hampshire. Many labels and registrations change from year to year, so applicators will want to be sure they are using a currently, registered product. Contact the Division of Pesticide Control (603-271-3550) for information on pesticide registration, how to acquire a special permit, lists of currently-licensed pesticide applicators, and other information pertaining to the rules and regulations governing pesticide application in this state.