LONICERA JAPONICA THUNB.

Caprifoliaceae/Honeysuckle Family

Common Name: Japanese honeysuckle
Synonymy: *Nintooa japonica* (Thunb.) Sweet
Origin: East Asia

Botanical Description: Twining or trailing woody vine with young stems pubescent. Leaves evergreen, opposite, simple, mostly 4-8 cm (1.6-3.2 in), with short pubescent petioles. Leaf blades ovate, elliptic, or oblong, usually with at least sparse pubescence on midrib above and below, entire except on vigorous spring shoots which often have blades pinnately lobed. Flowers fragrant, white turning to creamy yellow with age, occurring singly or more often in pairs, in leaf axils; corolla strongly bilabiate (2-lipped). Fruit a black, globose berry, 5-6 mm (0.25 in) long, with 2-3 seeds per berry.

NOTE: May be confused with the native coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens* L.), but its young stems and leaves glabrous, its flowers red with yellow within.

Ecological Significance: Occurs most densely in open woodlands, prairies, thickets, fence rows, and old fields, but also invades mature forests (dry and moist), thriving in tree gaps created by natural or artificial disturbance and persisting in partially shaded areas. Interrupts plant succession in once-forested areas by overtopping and smothering young trees, preventing their recruitment to the overstory (Myster and Pickett 1992). Can disrupt understory structure in mature forests by eliminating smaller tree species important to birds (Sather 1987). Deemed in 1971 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be one of the worst nonagricultural weeds in the Southeast, able to colonize various habitats and eliminate native flora (Sasek and Strain 1991). More recently also found to serve as temporary host for a spider mite pest of corn and peanuts (Margolies and Kennedy 1985) and for the tobacco budworm and corn earworm in Georgia and Florida (Pair 1994). Introduced in 1806 for ornament and later for erosion control; by 1919 naturalized from the Gulf of Mexico to Massachusetts (Sather 1987). Reported by Florida land managers for conservation areas in 7 counties from Okaloosa to Marion County (EPPC 1996). Also reported elsewhere in the eastern U.S. as an important pest in managed forests (Dillenburg *et al.* 1993) and natural areas (e.g., Thomas 1980). Still available in the Southeast as an ornamental, and sometimes promoted as deer forage (Dyess *et al.* 1994).

KCB

Flowers

Distribution: In Florida, found commonly in most Panhandle and northern counties, and south on the peninsula to Orange, Hillsborough, Sarasota, and Dade counties (Wunderlin *et al.* 1995). Now one of the most common vine species in the Southeast, and presently ranges in the U.S. from southern New England to Florida, west to Texas, Kansas, and Missouri, and north to Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan (Godfrey 1988).

Life History: With evergreen leaves, able to photosynthesize at a relatively high rate year-round, compared to woody deciduous natives (Schierenbeck and Marshall 1993). Twining stems able to climb small-diameter tree trunks, and with numerous lateral runners, can form dense overtopping mats of vegetation (Sather 1987). Provides strong below-ground root competition as well (Dillenburg *et al.* 1993). Flowers and fruits from spring to fall. Fruits eaten by deer, rabbits, turkeys, quail (Dyess *et al.* 1994), with seed dispersed primarily by birds (Sather 1987).

KAL

Hairy young stems

KAL

Habit, over shrubs