

# WEED of the MONTH

## Bush Honeysuckle *Lonicera* spps.

ODNR Division of Forestry

360 East State Street

Athens, Ohio 45701

740-589-9910 or 614-247-8733

Contact [annemarie.smith@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:annemarie.smith@dnr.state.oh.us) or [ann.bonner@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:ann.bonner@dnr.state.oh.us)

### Exotic Bush Honeysuckles

Exotic bush honeysuckles are upright, generally deciduous shrubs that range from 6 to 15 feet in height. The leaves are opposite along the stem and short-stalked. Older stems are hollow. Pairs of fragrant, tubular flowers less than an inch long are borne along the stem in the leaf axils. Flower color varies from creamy white to pink or crimson. Flowering generally occurs from early to late spring, but varies for each species and cultivar. The fruits are red to orange, many-seeded berries.



**Roadsides and forest edges in Athens, Chillicothe, Malta, Zanesville and even Middleport and Pomeroy are home to this aggressive shrub. It has also been found in Strouds Run State Park in Athens and Wolf Creek Wildlife Area in Morgan County.**

Bush honeysuckles can rapidly invade, overtake and crowd out native plant species. Exotic honeysuckles alter habitats by decreasing light availability, by depleting soil moisture and nutrients, and even by releasing toxic chemicals that prevent other plant species from growing in the vicinity. Exotic bush honeysuckles compete with native bush honeysuckles for pollinators, resulting in reduced seed set for native species. In addition, the fruits of exotic bush honeysuckles do not offer migrating birds the high-fat, nutrient-rich food sources needed for long flights, that are supplied by native plant species.

### How do I control bush Honeysuckle?

Mechanical and chemical methods are the primary means of control of exotic bush honeysuckles. No biological control agents are currently available for these plants and any potential agents that might

be considered would have to be specific to the exotic species, for obvious reasons. Hand removal of seedlings or small plants may be useful for light infestations, but care should be taken not to disturb the soil any more than necessary. In shaded forest habitats, where exotic bush honeysuckles tend to be less resilient, repeated clippings to ground level, during the growing season, may result in high mortality. Clipping must be repeated at least once yearly because bush honeysuckles that



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are cut once and left to grow will often form stands that are more dense and productive than they were prior to cutting.

Seedlings of exotic bush honeysuckles can also be controlled by application of a systemic herbicide, like glyphosate (e.g., Roundup®), at a 1 percent solution, sprayed onto the foliage or applied by sponge. Well established stands of exotic bush honeysuckles are probably best managed by cutting the stems to ground level and painting or spraying the stumps with a slightly higher rate of glyphosate (10-20%).

**USE PESTICIDES WISELY: ALWAYS READ THE ENTIRE PESTICIDE LABEL CAREFULLY, FOLLOW ALL MIXING AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND WEAR ALL RECOMMENDED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR AND CLOTHING. CONTACT YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL PESTICIDE USE REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Many native plants make excellent substitutes for exotic bush honeysuckles for home landscaping and wildlife planting. Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), ink-berry (*Ilex glabra*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), red chokecherry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), and arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*) are readily available through commercial nurseries in Ohio.

**For information on how to identify and control Bush Honeysuckle or how to better manage your trees, contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry at 740-589-9914.**

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Information taken from NPS factsheet, "Least Wanted, Exotic Honeysuckle"

<http://www.nps.gov/>

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