



Porcelainberry

Ampelopsis brevipedunculata
(Grape Family)

Threats to Native Habitats

Porcelainberry is relatively pest- and disease-free where it grows, in the northeastern part of the U.S. With no natural enemies to help keep this plant in check, it quickly overwhelms and outcompetes native vegetation. It grows in dense, sprawling mats over native plants, creating ugly, tangled, monocultural thickets. It is particularly successful in urban and suburban areas where there are numerous disturbances that enable it to become established.

Description

Porcelainberry is a deciduous, woody climbing vine with alternate bright green leaves that are typically three- to five-lobed and shaped somewhat like our native grape species. It is related to two North American species of *Ampelopsis*, raccoon grape and peppervine, and is sometimes called Amur peppervine or porcelain ampelopsis. The vines can climb over other vegetation to heights of up to 20 feet. Like our native grapes, porcelainberry climbs by tendrils that grow along the stem opposite the bases of the leaves. Flowers are small, greenish white, and occur in inconspicuous branched clusters throughout the height of the growing season. Berries of varying colors appear by late summer. Unfortunately, the multi-colored berries and ease of growth have created interest in this plant as a horticultural species. Horticultural plantings have helped this species spread widely throughout the northeast.

Habitat

Porcelainberry can grow in a variety of habitats and soil conditions. It is most aggressive in moist, open to partially shaded areas along streams. Seeds are spread into natural areas by birds, who eat the many berries produced by these plants.



Porcelainberry (photo by Francis H. Clark, courtesy of the New England Wild Flower Society)

Distribution

Porcelainberry is currently known to grow from southern New England to North Carolina, and west to Michigan. It was originally introduced as an ornamental landscape plant. In spite of its track record as an invasive plant, it is still used and is available through the horticultural trade. As of 2002, it has not been reported growing in any natural areas in Maine. Anyone aware of this species growing anywhere in Maine should contact the Maine Natural Areas Program. The traits that make porcelainberry a desirable garden plant—tolerance of a wide variety of growing conditions, pest-resistance, and aggressive growth—are what enable it to invade and threaten natural areas.

Control

This plant is available commercially, so the first step to prevent its spread is to refrain from using it in garden plantings. You can hand-pull smaller infestations. Remove plants before they set seed to avoid introducing more seeds into the environment. If you pull plants with fruit, burn the fruit before it ripens. Hand pulling can be difficult in areas where the plants are intertwined in thickets with other vegetation. Spot applications of herbicide may be more effective in these situations. Triclopyr and glyphosate-based herbicides are both options for killing porcelainberry. Avoid overspray onto desirable vegetation. Herbicide is most effective late in the season when plants are moving nutrients to their root systems. You can also cut plants back and then apply herbicide to new growth. Herbicide (a 20-30 percent mixture) can also be applied directly to the base areas of the stems. Mix the herbicide with an equal volume of basal oil, diesel fuel, fuel oil, or kerosene. Other products may be available for this type of use; check with a garden supplier for options. Basal applications should be made when temperatures will be warmer than 60 degrees F for a few days. Use herbicides responsibly and follow the manufacturer's directions. Contact the Maine Department of Agriculture for information on restrictions that apply to the use of herbicides. Consult a licensed herbicide applicator before applying herbicides over large areas.

References:

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For more information or for a more extensive list of references on invasive species contact:

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