

Kudzu

Pueraria lobata

Description -

- Fast-growing vine, usually has three leaflets but may be fused into 1-2 with major to minor lobes. Leaflets 2-4 inches wide and hairy on edges.
- Light purple/pink flowers with a fragrant, sweet grape smell in late summer.
- Roots are fleshy with massive tap roots.

Distribution - Major infestations in eastern and western Kentucky with scattered populations statewide.

Threat - Kudzu kills or degrades other plants by shading them under a blanket of leaves, by girdling stems and tree trunks, and by breaking branches or uprooting trees by its weight.

Control - Root system must be killed. Mow or cut monthly over two or more growing seasons. Sever vines and treat roots to get foliar levels manageable for more direct treatments. Late season cutting of vines at root tops followed by immediate stump treatment with 25% glyphosate works best. Foliar application of glyphosate to small plants repeatedly in a season may keep plants in check. No biological controls available. Burning will not kill roots and may stimulate dormant seeds to germinate. Seedlings can be herbicided or pulled, and fire helps clear site for native species and can reveal hidden obstacles.

Similar Plants - Native grapevines similar at a distance, but leaf edges saw-toothed, not smooth and not divided into 3 leaflets. In winter other vines generally lack fuzziness on youngest growth.

Origin - Asia (China, Japan)

(Reference: Plant Conservation Alliance, Alien Plant Working Group)

Information and resources provided by TN & SE Exotic Pest Plant Councils (tneppc.org and se-eppc.org), Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Program (samab.org), TVA, The University of Tennessee, US Fish & Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Plant Conservation Alliance, and others.

Chinese Yam

(Cinnamon Vine, Air Potato)

Dioscorea batatas, D. oppositifolia, D. bulbifera

Description -

- Chinese Yam and air potato are long-climbing vines with 2- to 3-inch wide shiny heart-shaped leaves having arc-shaped veins.
- Leaves may vary in shape to arrowhead-like with lobes at the leaf base.
- Pea- to marble-sized bulbils like small potatoes occur at leaf nodes in late summer. These may become potato-sized in other regions.
- Ripe bulbils drop readily at slightest touch.

Distribution - Found increasingly along stream corridors, forest openings, roadsides and around old home sites.

Threat - The vine is fast-growing (up to 1 inch per day at peak). It covers trees, shrubs, ground vegetation, and structures. It reproduces prolifically starting in late June, and can spread rapidly along forest edges and openings.

Control - Shading not recommended for long-term control. Mechanical control includes clipping, pulling, or burning plants before bulbils form in mid-June. Follow-on foliar herbicide control of sprouts with glyphosate. Glyphosate foliar spray (Roundup) June to August as bulbils just forming.

Similar Plants - The native yam has similar leaves, but does not grow as aggressively. It often remains small and vertical (non-vine) and is found in shady forests.

Origin - Asia

(Reference: The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, and the Universities of Tennessee, Florida, and Connecticut)

Information and resources provided by TN & SE Exotic Pest Plant Councils (tneppc.org and se-eppc.org), Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Program (samab.org), TVA, The University of Tennessee, US Fish & Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Plant Conservation Alliance, and others.

Japanese Stilt Grass

(Asian Stilt Grass, Nepal Grass)

Microstegium vimineum

Description -

- Pale green lance-like thin leaves up to 3 inches long on thin stems. Silvery strip of reflective hairs at center of upper side of leaf.
- Size varies; can be up to 3 feet tall, but often ½ to 2 feet. Sometimes seen as a nearly mat-like cover where mowed.
- Plants come up or break off easily.

Distribution - Observed along road sides, stream banks and trails, but also found deep in forests. Found throughout Kentucky.

Threat - Adapted to shade, invades forests, forms dense patches that crowd out native plants in open and shaded sites. Spreads easily and can take over fields and forests quickly, especially moist, rich soils and wetlands. Seeds remain viable for three years and are easily spread by hay, soil on shoes, tires, and by water.

Control - Repeated hand pulling, especially when plants are in full bloom (late summer). Larger populations may be weed-whacked in late summer just before plants produce seeds. Important to control small populations quickly. Chemical controls include glyphosate (Roundup). In wet areas, wetland formulations are needed (e.g., Rodeo).

Origin - Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, India

(Reference: Plant Conservation Alliance, Alien Plant Working Group)

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Chinese Yam



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