

GREEN GONE BAD

FEATURED ORNAMENTAL PLANT: *AKEBIA QUINATA* (CHOCOLATE VINE)

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on nature. One of these plants is *Akebia quinata*; common name: Chocolate Vine.

AKEBIA QUINATA is a perennial, deciduous or semi-evergreen woody vine in the family Lardizabalaceae. The native range of *Akebia quinata* is Central China, Korea, and Japan. It was introduced into the U.S. in 1845 as an ornamental where it has become established in areas with warm climates.



It can climb or twine but can also act like a vigorous groundcover. The stem is slender and green when young, turning brown when mature. The leaves are dull greenish-blue and palmately (like a hand) compound with 5 stalked leaflets 1.5 to 3 inches long with a rounded and notched tip. *Akebia quinata* flowers are reddish or purplish-brown with 3 petals about 1 inch across. Bloom time is late spring. Fruits are large, soft, purple oblong pods that are 2.5 - 4 inches long with a white pulpy core and tiny black seeds. Fruits are rarely produced.



The problem with *Akebia quinata* is that it can escape from planted landscapes into natural areas. It spreads through vegetative growth up to 40 feet in one growing season. The vegetative growth forms dense mats that shade out and smother all other plants while also preventing seed germination of native plants. It can kill native shrubs and taller canopy trees by twinning and climbing which results in reduction of plant biodiversity and overall quality of natural communities. Once native plant communities are altered, wildlife populations



may suffer including insect life on which songbirds depend to feed their young during nesting season.

It is not widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. There are many native woody vines that can be sold and planted in its place. These include Virginia Creeper, Yellow Jessamine, Coral Honeysuckle, Trumpet Creeper, Climbing Hydrangea, Dutchman's Pipe, and Cross Vine. Please visit

<http://www.invasive.org/species/subject.cfm?sub=10090>, for more information.

