



Bush Honeysuckle - A Central Indiana Menace

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The exotic and highly invasive bush honeysuckle continues to be a major problem in Central Indiana. Bush honeysuckle can rapidly invade and overtake other plants, forming a dense layer that by decreasing light availability, by depleting soil moisture and nutrients prevent other plant species from growing in the vicinity. As you walk in wooded areas and along roadsides where honeysuckle is prevalent, take a look and notice that no native wild flowers or other plants are growing under the honeysuckle.

You can identify this plant by its dark green egg shaped leaves (about 1 to 2 ½ inches long) that grow from the stem in opposite pairs. During the late fall and early winter, the profuse berries turn bright red. Mature plants are 6 to 15 feet tall. Their leaves persist on the plant into the early winter and turn a pale green after most other plant leaves have dropped. They are also among the first plants to leaf out in the spring.

Bush honeysuckle fruits prolifically and the berries are highly attractive to birds. In our area over twenty species of birds feed on the seed and spread the seed widely. In heavy growth areas new sprouts also grow from the roots of existing plants

Mechanical (hand pulling and cutting) and chemical methods are the best and easiest ways to control the spread of this highly detrimental plant. Young plants can easily be pulled from the ground. Large plants are best killed by cutting the main stem and spraying or painting the stump with a herbicide. Always follow label directions when using a herbicide. Spraying the entire growing plant with this herbicide is another alternative. Without herbicide treatment, the stumps will sprout new plants. Since the roots are shallow they are fairly easy to grub out as well.

Without control we can expect to lose a lot of the value of our central Indiana landscape, especially in the woodland edges. Now is the time for action. If you are willing to help with a control effort, please work with your neighbors and begin an eradication effort.

Join with your County Soil and Water Conservation District in the exciting new Plant a Million project. This project has as its goals to plant a million or more mostly native trees in our area and to help people learn how to manage and care for the trees they already have on their property. Honeysuckle control is an important part of this effort. Stop by the District Office to learn more about Plant a Million and to pick up your copy of Your Yard, Your Trees a 70 page full color book that will answer most of your tree care questions.