NEW JERSEY NON-NATIVE PLANTS

Mile-a-minute
(Polygonum perfoliatum)

Description

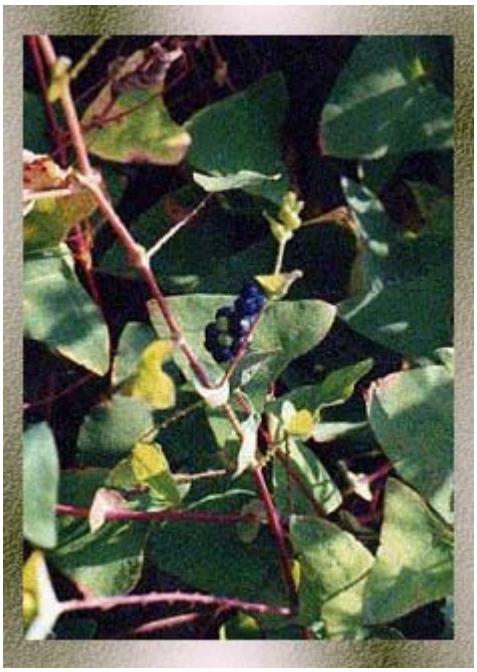
Mile-a-minute grows as an annual vine, climbing up to 20 feet in height. Its rapid growth, up to a half a foot per day, accounts for its common name. The leaves, one to three inches wide, are bright green and triangular. Both the leaves and the stems have short spines and prickles. Distinctive circular, cup shaped leafy structures, called ocreae, surround the stem at the nodes. The pea-size fruits, which emerge from within the ocreae, are blue in color and mature in late summer. Each berry-like fruit contains a single glossy, dark seed. The seeds are dispersed by birds, rodents, and water.

Why is mile-a-minute bad for New Jersey?

The rapid and dense growth of mile-a-minute allows it to overtake native vegetation, smothering seedlings and out-competing mature plants. Large infestations significantly alter the structure of natural plant communities and ultimately reduce biodiversity. Within the last decade, mile-a-minute has rapidly become a significant pest in locations along the Delaware River in Gloucester and Salem counties and in the Watchung Reservation, Union County. It is of particular concern in wet meadows that may contain rare wetland plants. A Gloucester County population of the State listed endangered Lancaster sedge (*Cyperus lancastriensis*) was destroyed within the span of a decade when its habitat was overrun and smothered by mile-a-minute. It is also can cause problems in gardens and landscaped yards and has the potential to become a serious pest in agricultural lands.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Science, Research and Technology
October, 2008

Mile-a-Minute



Control:

How can you get rid of mile-a-minute?

Manual:
Mile-a-minute can be hand-pulled (wearing gloves) from small areas before they set seed, and before they grow to the point of smothering other vegetation. Long pants and a long-sleeved shirt will help prevent skin abrasion. The plants lack deep-seated roots and are fairly easy to pull. Try to pull up the whole plant including its roots. Removing thick litter layers may also help to control the spread of the plant. Previously infested sites need to be rechecked several times each year, and new plants removed until seed germination period is complete (early April until early July).

Mechanical:
Mowing or weed whacking is effective as long as it is done prior to fruiting. Repeated mowing or whacking of low growing vines will reduce the plants' reserves and prevent or reduce flowering, which in turn reduces fruit and seed production. Maintaining broad vegetative buffers along streams and forest edges will help shade out and prevent establishment of mile-a-minute. This will also help to reduce the dispersal of fruits by water.

Mile-a-Minute

Chemical:
Heavily invested areas can be treated with herbicides before the plants go to seed. Herbicides should be used with caution as they can harm co-occurring indigenous plants. The most effective herbicides to use are systemic products like glyphosate (Roundup Classic for upland areas and Rodeo for wetland applications).

Biological:
Research on a biological control agent, a beetle/ weevil *(Rhinoncominus latipes),* is underway at the University of Delaware.