

# What strangles trees and smothers understory plants in the landscape?

## The Culprit: Round Leaf Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)



*Round leaf bittersweet threatens wooded areas of the Blue Ridge, and its range expands with each passing year.*

Round leaf bittersweet (formerly known as Asiatic bittersweet) was first introduced to the US from Asia in the 1860s as an ornamental garden plant.

**Now we know =>**

It spreads abundantly around old home sites, in fields and fencerows, along road edges, and in forests throughout Virginia.

### Why It's a Problem

- Smothers shrubs, wildflower and future tree generations on the ground
- Seeds are scattered far and wide with the help of birds and people
- Weight of the vine can topple trees, especially during storms



## What Does It Look Like?



Leaves are 2 to 5 inches long, glossy green and are widely spaced alternately around the stems.



Bark on the roots is bright orange. Fruit and flowers are located along the length of the stem. Fruits ripen to golden-yellow. In fall, the golden outer covering splits open to reveal several red, seed-containing arils nestled inside the split capsule.





Clusters of small, pale green, 5 petalled flowers bloom in early summer.



Grows as a twining or sprawling, many-branched, deciduous vine with woody stems. It can scale trees up to 60 feet high.

## How Do I Control It?

- Individual small plants can be pulled by hand. However, all roots must be removed to prevent resprouting.
- Cut stump treatments can be utilized from June through February.
- Foliar herbicide treatment is best suited from late spring through fall.



The cut stump method involves cutting the vines at ground level and then applying herbicide on the stump to prevent regrowth.

## Additional Information

### Blue Ridge PRISM

-- [Asiatic Bittersweet Fact Sheet](#)

-- [Resources on Invasive Plants](#)



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