

## CENTRAL JERSEY INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE TEAM

### *Invasive Plant Fact Sheet*

#### Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

**Also called:** Round leaved bittersweet or Asiatic bittersweet



**Family name:** Staff-tree family (Celastraceae)

**Native range:** Asia

**General:** An aggressive, fast growing, climbing vine of up to 60 feet. The bark varies in color from dark to reddish brown to grey. New growth is green. Young branches often show small light colored spots (lenticels). Older plants grow to 4 or more inches in diameter.

**Leaves:** Alternate, sharply toothed. Mature leaves are rounded. Young leaves are narrow and tapered at the tips.

**Flowers:** Small and greenish colored, appearing from May to early June. Flowers grow from the leaf axils.

**Fruit:** Abundant, yellow, appearing in September to November and may persist

through winter. About 0.25 inches round, the fruits become especially obvious at maturity when the yellow to deep orange arils (fleshy seed covering) are exposed.

**Look-alikes:** American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) is very similar to Oriental bittersweet. The flowers of American bittersweet are located at the *ends of the branches*. Fruit are larger and a deeper red-orange. The leaves are narrower and tapered. *Young Oriental bittersweet leaves are narrow and tapered at the tips.*



**Habitat:** Roadsides, forest edges, woods, fields, and meadows. Thrives in sunny locations but also tolerates shade.

**Threats to native habitats:** Oriental bittersweet can quickly overtop shrubs and trees, completely shading them from the sun. The vine can also girdle and/or pull down mature trees and branches. In the absence of vegetation or other structures to climb, Oriental bittersweet will create dense mats that suppress the growth of other plant life.

**NJ Status:** Oriental bittersweet is widespread. It is *highly threatening* to natural plant communities. All newly detected occurrences should be eradicated.

**Commercial Availability:** Oriental bittersweet is planted in landscaping and gardens.

Sources: Forestry Images: Forest Health, Natural Resources & Silviculture Images:

<http://www.forestryimages.org/>

<http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=27>

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/ceor1.htm>

Rhoads, A.F. and T. Block. 2007. *Plants of Pennsylvania*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA. p. 523-4.



**Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team (CJISST)** is a regional cooperative effort to detect, map, and manage emerging populations of invasive species. This initiative is a partnership of state, county, and municipal agencies, conservation groups, and private citizens. To learn more, please contact us: **Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space**, (609) 730-1560, [www.fohvos.org](http://www.fohvos.org) or **Upper Raritan Watershed Association**, (908) 234-1852, [www.urwa.org](http://www.urwa.org).

