THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Weed of The Week

Bush Honeysuckle *(Lonicera spp.)*

This invasive is not a typical “weed”, however, it remains an invasive problem for many landowners throughout Ohio. The “bush honeysuckle” is a term given to three common invasive honeysuckles found throughout Ohio including the Amur, Morrow, and Tartarian honeysuckles. These woody shrubs have long arching branches and can range from 6 to 20 feet tall. They are aggressive invaders that out compete and shade out desirable native woodland species. Bush honeysuckles can form pure, dense thickets void of other vegetation. The bush honeysuckles leaf out earlier in the spring and retain their leaves later into the fall than most native trees and shrubs.

Mature invasive bush honeysuckles have hollow stems whereas the native non-invasive honeysuckles have solid stems. They have fragrant tubular flowers that appear along the stems in early to late spring. Amur and Morrow typically have white flowers that turn yellow as they age; Tartarian has pale pink to crimson flowers. They form small round berries in clusters of 2 to 15, which are most often red.

If you have only a few small plants, they can be pulled, dug, and cut out. Bush honeysuckles have a shallow root system. Cutting and mowing are most effective when initiated in early summer when food reserves are at their lowest. To achieve control, pulling or digging must be done so that essentially every root is removed. For medium to large bush honeysuckle, mechanical methods alone are usually not enough to remove this shrub. Bush honeysuckle leaves are green and active late into fall, which makes it an ideal time to apply a foliar spray with little to no impact on non-target species after the first hard frost. For foliar treatment herbicides such as glyphosate, 2,4-D & triclopyr, or just triclopyr on its own can be effective. Cut stump herbicide treatments are another method of chemical control. Common herbicides for this method include glyphosate, 2,4-D & picloram, 2,4-D & triclopyr, or just triclopyr alone. Basal spraying during the dormant season has also shown effectiveness using herbicides containing triclopyr & imazapyr or 2,4-D & triclopyr. As this plant is aggressive, it may take several applications to fully eliminate it. As always, follow the label when using any herbicides.