

Radio Program 11/27/18

What is the “Wild” Shrub with the Bright Red Berries? This is likely bush honeysuckle, which can get anywhere from 6-20 feet tall depending on what environment it is in. This landscape shrub has become a serious invasive understory species throughout the Midwest from eastern Kansas all the way to Ohio. I first noticed it while out on a couple farm visits and now I can't stop seeing it pop up mainly around the Ottawa area, or so it seems.

Many states actually have it on their noxious weeds list, though Kansas does not at this time and doesn't look like it will be adding it anytime soon as it is just so wide spread already. We do have some native honey suckles, but all of them are vines not the shrub that I have been spotting.

So how do you spot Bush honeysuckle? Well Bush honeysuckle is very noticeable in the spring as they put out leaves much earlier than most other trees and shrubs, but the leaves also stay green much later into the fall than most of the other trees and shrubs in the area. Which is what used to make it a great landscaping plant in the mid 1800's. The problem is that it's long growing season gives it a competitive advantage over other native species, and its vigorous growth can take over a woodland understory, reducing the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs. If you want to promote native species on your property, then controlling bush honeysuckles is very much needed.

So how do we control it? Well bush honeysuckle seedlings can be readily hand pulled when the soil is damp. But chemical control is going to be needed for larger infestations, as cutting alone results in vigorous re-sprouting. We can treating cut stumps with Tordon RTU (picloram), or concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate has also been found to be quite effective. Several studies have shown basal spraying with triclopyr (Remdy) has not been found to be effective, while basal applications with 2,4-D or Tordon (picloram) products have worked well. Foliar applications of Crossbow (2,4,D + triclopyr (Remedy)) have also worked really well. But recently, a new method has emerged as the leading technique to treat infestations of bush honeysuckle: the use of backpack mist blowers to apply glyphosate. Perhaps more than any other method, mist blowing offers effective control at a low cost per acre by decreasing the time spent and the cost of chemicals. A backpack mist blower allows for quick treatment of large areas without a decrease in effectiveness. It is common to treat 1 to 2 acres per hour effectively with little impact on non-target species when applied at the correct time of year.

The window for mist blower treatment is in late fall, when native plants have gone dormant and only bush honeysuckle retains its leaves. This allows for highly targeted application to the invasive species and limits impact on our native plants. In Kansas, the window for mist blower herbicide application is often late October through mid-November. If the bush honeysuckle's leaves have yellowed or started to drop, we have probably missed our chance to control it this year. But getting it on your radar is always important.

While Glyphosate is available in many formulations and brands, not all are labeled for use in mist blowers. So please follow all label instructions when using pesticides.

If you have questions, please call me at 785.448.6826!