**Shrubby Honeysuckle**

Bulletin #2507

**Threats to Native Habitats**

Shrub honeysuckles can rapidly invade and degrade native plant communities. They form a dense layer that shades the ground, interfering with the growth of many native woody and herbaceous species, including rare plants. The ground under a honeysuckle thicket is often void of other vegetation. Shrub honeysuckles leaf out earlier than native species and they retain their leaves longer into the fall, giving them a competitive edge. Their success on high pH, dry, exposed soils has made them a threat to some of the Northeast’s unique limestone plant communities. The fruit of these shrubs is eaten by common birds, which helps spread the seed into new locations and makes the shrub even more difficult to control.

See also a good write up from the Kittery (Maine) Land Trust at [**http://www.kitterylandtrust.org/honeysuckle1.cfm**](http://www.kitterylandtrust.org/honeysuckle1.cfm) on the ecological threat from honeysuckle as follows:

"Exotic bush honeysuckles can rapidly invade and overtake a site, forming a dense shrub layer that crowds and shades out native plant species. They alter habitats by decreasing light availability, by depleting soil moisture and nutrients, and possibly by releasing toxic chemicals that prevent other plant species from growing in the vicinity. Exotic bush honeysuckles may compete with native bush honeysuckles for pollinators, resulting in reduced seed set for native species. In addition, the fruits of exotic bush honeysuckles, while abundant and rich in carbohydrates, do not offer migrating birds the high-fat, nutrient-rich food sources needed for long flights, that are supplied by native plant species.

**Control**

The best method of control is to prevent non-native shrubby honeysuckles from becoming established. These plants should be removed as soon as possible if they are found colonizing an area. Small infestations can be cleared by hand using a shovel or hoe, provided the entire root is removed. Larger colonies have been controlled by various combinations of repeated treatments of mechanical control, burning, or applying a glyphosate herbicide.

If cutting is included as part of a treatment, it should be done in early spring and in late summer or early fall. Cutting of plants results in resprouting, but is effective in temporarily reducing seed production. Seedlings are easily pulled. Treatment by prescribed burning is most effective if conducted during the growing season. Control methods may need to be repeated for three to five years to inhibit resprouting and to exhaust the seedbank.