

Morrow's honeysuckle
Lonicera morrowii A. Gray
and
Amur honeysuckle
Lonicera maackii (Rupr.) Maxim.
Honeysuckle Family (Caprifoliaceae)



Morrow's honeysuckle in flower

DESCRIPTION

These non-native honeysuckles are both upright, multistemmed, deciduous shrubs with a dense twiggy growth habit. In addition to the two species described here, other non-native bush honeysuckles including Tatarian honeysuckle (*L. tatarica*), pretty honeysuckle (*L. x bella*), fragrant honeysuckle (*L. fragrantissima*), and honeysuckle (*L. standishii*) are also naturalized in Pennsylvania.

Height - These shrubs can reach a height of 8–15 feet and a spread of 8–10 feet.

Stem - branches are stiff with a light gray-brown bark, the pith is white or tan with a hollow center.

Leaves - The honeysuckles have opposite leaves with smooth (entire) margins. Morrow's honeysuckle has elliptical leaves that are 1–2 inches long and softly hairy and slightly gray-green. The leaves of Amur honeysuckle are ovate, about 2–3 inches long with a long tapering tip; they are dark green in color. Both species leaf out very early in the spring, before most native plants, and hold their leaves far into the fall.

Flowers - Both species have $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 inch-long white, tubular flowers with flaring petals that turn yellow as they age. The flowers, which are produced in pairs on a single stalk, bloom in May. Pretty honeysuckle (*Lonicera x bella*), which is otherwise very similar to Morrow's honeysuckle, has pink flowers.

Fruit and seed - All the bush honeysuckles produce small juicy red or orange berries that are eaten by many species of birds and small mammals. The fruit of Morrow's honeysuckle ripens late June–early August, that of Amur honeysuckle September–November. Like the flowers, honeysuckle fruits are produced in pairs.



Amur honeysuckle in fruit

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

Morrow's honeysuckle is native to Japan; Amur honeysuckle originated in eastern Asia and was first brought to the United States in 1898. Planted as ornamentals and for wildlife habitat, these shrubs have spread throughout the East and Midwest and are found in old fields, open woods, edges, and roadsides.

Non-native bush honeysuckles are widely established throughout Pennsylvania. They have increased rapidly in the past 40–50 years. Fragmented forest remnants in agricultural, suburban, and urban areas are particularly vulnerable to invasion, especially in areas of limestone geology. Although the plants need full sunlight to flower and fruit heavily, they can also persist in shaded situations.

EFFECTS OF INVASION

Because of their aggressive growth, Morrow's honeysuckle and Amur honeysuckle are a threat to the integrity of the forest communities they invade. They not only compete with native shrubs, they also inhibit forest floor wildflowers due to their dense growth and early leaf-out.

A study of the nesting success of native songbirds found increased predation of nests of robins built in Amur honeysuckle and glossy buckthorn compared with those in native shrubs.

REPRODUCTION AND DISPERSAL

Most reproduction is by seed; Amur honeysuckle seeds do not require stratification and germination rates of 50–80 percent have been documented. They do not form a persistent seed bank. Amur honeysuckle begins to produce seed as early as 3–5 years of age; large crops are produced annually. The plants also sprout from cut stems or the root crown, the sprouting response is particularly vigorous if the plants are cut back in the winter. Other non-native shrub honeysuckles show similar patterns.

CONTROL

Mechanical - Pulling out seedlings and mature plants is effective especially early in an infestation or in the case of small populations where use of herbicide is not possible. The process will have to be repeated for several years, and monitored thereafter, to achieve lasting control. Clipping stems at the base is effective, but also must be repeated until resprouting ceases. Clipping during the winter should be avoided as the plants resprout exceptionally vigorously the following spring.

Chemical - Glyphosate and triclopyr have been used effectively to control bush honeysuckles either as foliar sprays (2%) or when applied to cut stems (20–25%). Late season treatment is most effective.

Biological - No biological control options are currently known, however a aphid that feeds on the tips of the branches of several species of bush honeysuckles causes the formation of twiggy growths known as witches-brooms, and appears to reduce flowering.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR LANDSCAPE USE

Many native shrubs can provide attractive flower and fruit displays and serve as food for birds and other wildlife: winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), red or black chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*, *A. melanocarpa*), bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), arrow-wood (*Viburnum recognitum* or *V. dentatum*), wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), silky dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

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- Internet resources** – <http://www.paf flora.org>, <http://www.invasivespecies.gov>



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