

EIGHT REASONS FOR REMOVING AMUR HONEYSUCKLE

(Lonicera maackii)

1. Amur Honeysuckle is one of the first shrubs to “leaf out” in the spring. It shades the forest floor just when native spring ephemerals *must have* sunshine to carry out an annual life cycle in a period of three to four months. Honeysuckle displaces and out-competes these native wildflowers for light and other resources. Ohio has a rich heritage of spring wildflowers, a heritage which will disappear. Rare species in natural areas are impacted and threatened.

2. Honeysuckle prevents the regeneration of a forest. New saplings are shaded out, and when mature trees grow old and die, there will be no younger trees to take their place.

3. Honeysuckle produces abundant fruit and seed which most people think are beneficial to bird species; in fact, these fruits are NOT NUTRITIOUS, as they contain pure sugar akin to eating a bowl of M & M's. Unfortunately, birds spread the seed everywhere.

Three of the MOST nutritious fruits for birds come from the native plants, Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), and Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*). Each of these species' fruits contains lipids or fats which are crucial for supplying migrating birds with energy.

4. Honeysuckle grows densely in the under story, and people think that it provides good cover and nesting sites for birds. This is incorrect. From a bird's eye view above the forest honeysuckle appears thick, but from a predator's view on the ground the bare “legs” of honeysuckle make nests visible. Predation of nests is higher in honeysuckle than in native shrubs.

5. When honeysuckle was brought to the United States from China around 1850, its associated insects were not, and *native* insects do not eat the leaves. Douglas Tallamy, entomologist and author of Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens, states that protein rich larvae of insects are essential to the well-being of birds. Native plants produce 4 times more herbivore biomass (caterpillars) than alien species; and therefore, bird populations are limited by the amount of food they can find. It could be said that honeysuckle is responsible for starving the birds!

6. Honeysuckle reduces species diversity and forms a monoculture. Every native species, including plants and animals, (mammals, amphibians, insects, etc.) has associations or is part of a food chain. It is sort of like a spider's web. The web maintains its integrity when all the connections are intact, but weakens as those connections are broken. As more connections are broken, the web will ultimately collapse. Tallamy states, “Non-Native plants occupy space and use resources (light, water, and soil nutrients) that would otherwise have been available for a native plant, but it will not pass the energy it harnesses from the sun up the food chain.”

7. Honeysuckle affects human recreation. A dense and impenetrable stand of honeysuckle prevents the enjoyment of a forest; but of course, there is usually little plant and animal life left to see anyway.

8. Honeysuckle and other non-native invasive plants impact people's resources, time, and economics. \$35 billion per year is spent on their elimination. We all can think of better ways to spend that money.

For “25 Ways To Remove Amur Honeysuckle”, see the Greater Cincinnati Chapter Wild Ones web site, www.cincinnatiwildones.com/wildones Chris McCullough, President, iluvdirt@fuse.net