

Mile-a-minute weed (*Persicaria perfoliata*)

Fast-Growing Mighty Menace to Trees and Shrubs



All photos courtesy of Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, unless otherwise noted



Key ID Features

Stems: herbaceous annual vines with tiny, sharp, recurved barbs

Leaves: alternate, equilateral triangular shaped, about 3" long

Flowers: tiny, white clusters bloom throughout the summer

Fruit: bunches of green, single seeded fruits ripen to bright blue

Other features: circular, cup shaped, leafy structures called ochreae surround the stems at the leaf nodes



Robert Hartzler, Iowa State University

The Impact

Mile-a-minute weed is a member of the polygonum or buckwheat family. It is native to Asia and was accidentally introduced into Pennsylvania in the 1930s. It has been found in all Mid-Atlantic states, as well as New York, the Midwest, and southern New England. In 2023, it was found in Maine and Vermont. Mile-a-minute weed has a large potential to spread farther north because the seeds require an eight week cold period in order to flower. Growing up to six inches per day, mile-a-minute weed forms dense mats that stress, weaken, and eventually kill native plants through smothering, sunlight blockage, and physical damage. This can drastically interfere with natural succession processes in fields and forests, as well as regularly disturbed areas such as power line and utility right of ways. Thickets of these barbed plants also deter human recreation and travel.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Polygonum

Origin: Asia, India

Habitat: disturbed areas, fields, forest edges, forests, stream banks, wetlands

Present in Vermont? yes, very limited

Method of Spread: primarily by seeds dispersed via wildlife

Status: Designated Plant Pest*

**The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, in consultation with the Agency of Natural Resources, has identified and regulated this species because it presents an ecological and economic threat to Vermont.*

Invasive



Mile-a-minute weed



Native Look-Alikes



Climbing false buckwheat:

Leaves ovate to heart-shaped, not triangular



Arrowleaf tearthumb:

Narrower leaves, no ochreae or leaf nodes

Native Plant Alternatives*



American hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*): Larval host for native butterflies. Underground fruits are edible. Can become a weed in shady garden areas.

**Few native plants are known to outcompete mile-a-minute weed*

Control Information

Hand pulling before seeds develop is recommended. Always follow the label when using pesticides. A weevil is undergoing research as a biocontrol agent.

For further information on control:

<https://www.invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/control-vines.htm>

References: University of Wisconsin-Madison Ext. - UConn Ext./Bugwood.org - PennState Extension - Purdue Extension - National Invasive Species Information Center - Native Plant Trust - Iowa State University

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