

## ELEVEN 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 these wildflowers by out-competing them for sunlight and other resources. Ohio has a rich heritage of spring flora that is endangered and will disappear, in particular, the rare species of natural areas.

2. Honeysuckle prevents the regeneration of a forest. New saplings are shaded out, and when mature trees grow old and die, there will be few young 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. Where honeysuckle grows in a dense stand, low light levels below the shrubs prevent the growth of any other plants. The resulting bare ground is subject to damage by erosion.

5. Honeysuckle that is growing densely in the understory causes people to 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 impenetrable. From a predator's view on the ground, however, the bare “legs” of honeysuckle make nests visible. Predation of nests is higher in honeysuckle than in native shrubs.

6. 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 and reducing their numbers by not attracting native insects that would be potential food for them.

7. 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.” Honeysuckle interrupts the food chain.

8. 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.

**9.** 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.

**10.** Honeysuckle concentrates and increases deer pressure on the land. Deer will browse in areas with fewer honeysuckle shrubs so that herbivory on the remaining native plants will be greater – an even greater loss of diversity. Young tree saplings browsed by deer and will not survive. As in reason number 2, forests will be greatly diminished.

**11.** The presence of Amur Honeysuckle may be increasing the risk of tick-borne diseases, especially in suburban areas where homes are built near woodland edges.

“Invasive bush honeysuckle might be increasing tick-borne disease risk on a pretty large spatial scale,” says Brian Allan of the University of Illinois. Allan has studied how honeysuckle, deer and ticks interact, and he has learned the shrub attracts deer, and as a result, attracts more ticks. That means people don't have to go to the woods and prairies to find ticks anymore. The deer are bringing them to us. And it has the effect of concentrating deer in locations where honeysuckle is present, particularly in suburban landscapes.

The shrub produces several stems that arch outward, forming a canopy that creates ideal bedding areas for white-tailed deer. “Deer are using the shrubs for shelter,” Allan says. “There's nothing that really compares to it in terms of native vegetation.” Areas invaded by bush honeysuckle have a higher density of ticks infected with pathogens than areas of native vegetation.

Deer ticks are the main carrier of **Lyme disease**. “Deer are a food source for adult ticks and a transport mechanism,” says Linn Haramis, entomologist from the Illinois Department of Public Health. “Unlike mosquitoes, ticks don't have wings.” Wandering deer moving along river corridors may be carrying ticks to new areas.

For “**32 Ways To Remove Amur Honeysuckle**”, see the Greater Cincinnati Chapter Wild Ones web site, [www.cincinnatiwildones.org](http://www.cincinnatiwildones.org)

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