



Mad Gardeners, Inc

MILE-A-MINUTE VINE CONTROL PROJECT REPORT



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THERE IS GOOD NEWS in the battle against the invasive annual Mile-a-Minute Vine (MAM):

- A tiny weevil, *Rhinoncomimus latipes*, one of many insects that eat MAM in its home range in Asia, has been introduced for biocontrol. The weevils cannot reproduce without MAM. They lay their eggs on MAM stems and only on MAM stems. The larvae feed inside MAM stems and adults feed on MAM leaves. The weevils were first released in Delaware in 2004, then later in nearby states. Early results are promising. Weevils don't kill every MAM plant, but substantially reduce plant size and seed production. It is hoped that the weevils may reduce MAM to the status of just another annoying weed.
- The State of Connecticut took a much more active role in MAM control in 2009. Connecticut Invasive Species Coordinator Logan Senack initiated a large public education program. The biocontrol team, Carole Cheah and Todd Mervosh of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and Donna Ellis of the University of Connecticut, released weevils in seven towns.
- Since 2007, very few MAM plants have survived to produce seed in the New Milford, Bridgewater, and Roxbury populations, thanks to the efforts of Mad Gardeners' MAM control crew. Population spread has been halted, plant numbers reduced, and some patches eliminated.
- The Mad Gardeners crew continued their public awareness program, distributing MAM information at fairs and other events, and to libraries, land use offices, public works departments, and many businesses in most towns in Litchfield County and many towns in Fairfield County.

THERE IS ALSO BAD NEWS:

- Several more infestations were discovered in Connecticut, mostly in the SW corner of the state. Populations are now found in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Mile-a-Minute is not going away. The tiny seeds are carried by water, birds and deer. People are the responsible for most or all long-distance spread, moving seeds in soil on garden plants, in bulk soil, and in mulch.

THE 2010 PROJECT:

A grant from CT DEP to the Town of New Milford will fund a large portion of this year's work by the Mad Gardeners' control crew. Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust will be the official employer of the two student workers, Eric Andruk and Willie Mandeville, who have worked for us since 2008. They know just where to search. Very few plants escape their eagle eyes. Volunteer Nancy Dillon and I will also be doing field work.

Our method is "search and destroy". Cooperative homeowners have allowed us to inspect their properties. Most of the patches, anywhere from a single plant to patches several acres in size, were identified in 2007. The search area expanded in 2008; a few more small patches were found. Approximately 150 properties in New Milford and Bridgewater have been inspected. About half of them have MAM. All the patches appear to be from seeds deposited prior to 2007. The MAM areas appear to be confined to a 1 mile diameter area in the Dorwin Hill area of New Milford/Bridgewater and a half-mile diameter area near New Milford High School. We pay special attention to watercourses, searching far downstream, to be sure seeds carried by water have not established new populations.

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More information at www.madgardeners.com and <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/mam/>