

Mile-A-Minute Vine

On the Move

Prepared by Kathleen Nelson, Mad Gardeners' Mile-a-Minute Control Project, 2/22/14

PLEASE CHECK YOUR PROPERTY FOR *PERSICARIA PERFOLIATA*, MILE-A-MINUTE VINE (MAM). Yearly checks plus timely action can prevent MAM from becoming a serious pest on your property. See the video at www.madgardeners.com for help recognizing the plant.

Mile-a-Minute Vine, an invasive annual vine from Asia, is being found in more and more places in New England. *Expect it to arrive at your property soon.* MAM usually arrives in new places in soils that contain MAM seeds. Once arrived, birds and other animals carry seeds to nearby properties. Be prepared to take immediate action to prevent establishment of new patches. A single seed arriving at a new place can, within 4-5 years, give rise to a large dense patch covering all other vegetation and producing hundreds of thousands of seeds each year plus satellite patches at least as far as a mile away.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE MILE-A-MINUTE VINE: See MAM identification cards.

PREVENTION: MAM arriving from a distance often comes in with soil – perhaps a seed in bulk soil, or on the soil of a potted plant, or on the tires of equipment, or even on shoes.

- Don't bring "topsoil" or mixes containing "topsoil" to your property. (Commercial compost, which is heated to a high temperature, should be weed free)
- Avoid bare soil: a healthy groundcover of native plants is preferable to a sea of mulch.
- Don't destroy the "edges": Leave the natural leaf fall at the edges of lawns. Raking extra leaves into the woods kills the natural cover leaving a place for weed seeds to germinate. Raking all the leaves out provides bare spots where seeds can germinate.
- Remove the non-native invasive shrubs that often form an impenetrable mess in old fields and at woodland edges. Many provide perfect places for MAM to hide. Start with those that have thorns: multiflora rose and barberry. Remove honeysuckle, burning bush, autumn olive and other invasive shrubs and trees. Remove Oriental bittersweet and porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis*) vines. Where shrubs are desired in a MAM area, consider open shrubs such as the native spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) which is open enough that MAM can't hide beneath it.

CHECK YOUR PROPERTY FOR MAM at least once every year between mid-July and frost. Pay particular attention to bird places: shrubby areas, woodland edges, and under trees standing in the open.

REPORT ALL SUSPECTED SIGHTINGS: <http://www.mam.uconn.edu> . (If you misplace this address, Google "MAM CT".) Somebody will reply and check your property if necessary.

IF YOU HAVE MAM: check <http://www.madgardeners.com/2012Project.pdf>

- **CONTROL REQUIRES PREVENTING SEED PRODUCTION: TIMING IS CRITICAL. THE GOAL IS TO REMOVE ALL MAM PLANTS BEFORE THEY PRODUCE SEED.**
- If you find MAM in Litchfield County and would like property-specific control advice, contact Kathleen Nelson, knelson@madgardeners.com or 860-355-1547.
- Clean up any areas of invasive shrubs that make access difficult. (see cautions below)
- If the patch is at the edge of a lawn, consider expanding the mowed area. MAM does not survive regular lawn-height mowing. If possible, begin mowing before seed production in mid-June
- MAM seeds germinate in early April. Some pre-emergent herbicides reduce MAM germination. If you plan to use a pre-emergent herbicide, it needs to be applied in mid-to-late March. See http://www.cipwg.uconn.edu/pdfs/2012_Report_MAM_Vine.pdf

- **Seed production can begin as early as mid-June. Remove all MAM plants in known MAM areas prior to June 15.**
- **Pulling is easy and very effective.** Use gloves to protect your hands from the annoying prickles. Our group does not recommend general-purpose foliar herbicides for MAM control. They are not 100% effective. They kill plants that compete with MAM but they do not kill MAM seeds. They may harm other plants, and they may harm you.
- **Recheck known MAM areas every three weeks until frost.** MAM roots usually come out easily when pulled, but sometimes the stem breaks. Also, you may miss a few plants. Repeat checks don't take long. By rechecking regularly you may catch all the plants before they produce seeds.
- Plants not yet in flower can be dropped in place. They will dry out and be dead by lunchtime. Don't put them in piles – plants at the bottom of a pile may root.
- **Disposal: If there is any sign of flower buds, flowers, fruits, or seeds, dispose of them as described below.** Do NOT put them in your compost pile. MAM flower buds, flowers, and fruits all look like small green spheres. There are often smaller hidden fruits produced before the main batch – if in doubt, bag and dispose of the plants.
- Seeds live for many years. **Continue inspections and pulling yearly** at least as long as three years after removing the last MAM plant. The work will be easier each year.
- Don't expect the "MAM weevils" to solve the problem – they will not.

CAUTION:

- **Disposal:** Dispose of MAM plants containing flower buds, flowers, fruits or seeds in a safe manner. Usually this means bagging the plants in heavy contractors bags and disposing of the bags with kitchen garbage to be incinerated.
- Don't remove brush or soil from a MAM area.
- **Clean all equipment, including mowers,** from a MAM work area on-site or, if that is not possible, on a flat lawn. Do NOT clean equipment on a driveway or road as MAM seeds could be carried by water to a new location with the road run-off.

MAM BIOLOGY:

- MAM is an annual. Plants die at the end of the season.
- Seeds germinate in early April. Plants are usually about a foot or two tall by June 1st, but may be taller or shorter depending on spring weather.
- By late summer MAM plants are growing about 3 feet a week (6 inches per day!)
- MAM produces seeds from mid-June to frost. A single MAM plant can produce 2000 seeds per season.
- Most seeds germinate the first year. There are still plenty to germinate the second year. **A few seeds remain viable for extended periods of time** - nobody knows how long. We know it is longer than 6 years. If even one seed out of 2000 remains viable for 20 years, that is enough to re-establish a population in just a couple of years.

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT for help from Mad Gardeners' Mile-a-Minute Control Project in Litchfield County: contact Kathleen Nelson by email at knelson@madgardeners.com or by telephone at 860-355-1547

- Suspected sightings and property-specific control advice: call anytime
- Property inspections: July 15 - frost

MORE INFORMATION:

- From UConn: <http://www.mam.uconn.edu/>
- Details of what I've learned: <http://www.madgardeners.com/2012Project.pdf>
- More about MAM from Mad Gardeners: www.madgardeners.com