

Homeowner's Guide: How to Remove Invasive Bush Honeysuckle and Wintercreeper from Your Yard

What do we mean by "invasive" plants? They are aggressive, non-native species which cause or are likely to cause economic harm, environmental harm, or harm to human health.

Codes in Roeland Park prohibit specific invasive plant species on private and public property. The City is working on eradicating two invasive plant species in Cooper Creek Park which have gotten a strong foothold over many decades, choking out native plants, including many trees. The thick and entrenched growth of these invasives made it impossible for the City to remove them all by hand. Habitat Architects, a professional, environmentally-sound company, was hired to cut down and/or treat with herbicide the wintercreeper groundcover and vines, bush honeysuckle, 7 Callery Pear trees, and a Tree of Heaven.

The following information, some of which is from the Missouri Invasive Plant Council (MoIP), will help Roeland Park homeowners identify two common invasive plants, bush honeysuckle and wintercreeper, that could be growing in your yard.

Description of Invasive Bush Honeysuckle:



Bush Honeysuckle in the Spring



Bush Honeysuckle in the Summer/Fall

Bush honeysuckle is a large, upright, multi-stemmed, and spreading shrub reaching up to 20 feet in height, with flowers that change from white to yellow; red berries; and leaves that green up much earlier than the surrounding native vegetation. In late autumn, leaves remain green and attached well after the leaves of our native trees and shrubs have fallen.

Because bush honeysuckle forms a dense understory, it limits the amount of sunlight reaching native plant seedlings, inhibiting their growth. It competes with native plants for moisture and nutrients in the soil. Bush honeysuckle is also allelopathic, which means it produces a chemical that inhibits the germination and growth of other plants. Bush honeysuckle spreads from the roots, allowing it to further dominate an area.

Recommended Techniques to Control Bush Honeysuckle:

Hand-pulling of Seedlings: Seedlings may be hand-pulled when soils are moist. All of the root must be removed or re-sprouting will occur.

Digging Out the Entire Plant and Roots: Though labor intensive, honeysuckle bushes can be removed by digging out the plant and roots entirely with a shovel.

Smothering: In small areas the cut stumps can be covered with black plastic or deep layers of cardboard to block the light. The stumps must remain covered for many months to kill the plants.

Stem and Stump Cutting: Stems can be cut at the base with brush-cutters, chainsaws or hand tools. After re-sprouting, cutting the new growth from the stump at least every two weeks for a growing season can be effective in killing the plant. For best results, cut stumps low enough to mow over when cutting the lawn.

Cutting Followed by Herbicide Application: Bush honeysuckle stems can be cut at the base. After cutting, and to prevent re-sprouting, a 20-percent solution of glyphosate (brand name Rodeo) should be applied directly to the cut portion of the stump from a bottle with a dauber tip or with a sponge applicator. Glyphosate is nonselective, so care should be taken to avoid contacting non-target plants. Do not let the glyphosate run or drip down the cut stump into the soil. Do not apply glyphosate if it has rained within the last 24 hours or if it is projected to rain within the next 48 hours. Herbicide application in the dormant season – late summer or early fall – has proven effective. Some re-sprouting may occur, making a follow-up treatment necessary.

Description of Invasive Wintercreeper:



Wintercreeper as ground cover



Wintercreeper as a vine

Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) is an evergreen perennial vine, native to China, Japan, and Korea, that was introduced as an ornamental groundcover. Leaves are glossy, dark green, oval, slightly toothed, with light-colored veins, about 1-2.5 in. long. Flowers are small and greenish and occur in clusters. Fruits are rounded and smooth in an orange capsule, maturing from September through November.

Wintercreeper is an aggressive evergreen vine that grows across the ground, eliminating native plants and seedlings. It climbs fences, walls, and trees, reaching as high as 70 feet into the tree canopy by clinging to the bark, eventually killing the tree. It can tolerate most growing conditions.

Recommended Techniques to Control Wintercreeper:

Hand-pulling: In small areas, individual wintercreeper vines should be pulled up by the roots and properly disposed of. Pulled vines will re-root if left on the ground. Any new growth of vines should be pulled and disposed of as soon as possible.

Pruning: Birds and small mammals spread wintercreeper when they eat the berries. Cutting wintercreeper to the ground to prevent it from fruiting is one way to prevent spread. This is not a permanent solution, so the vines must be cut back periodically in the spring and late fall.

Cutting Vines: Vines too thick to be pulled up by the roots should be cut close to the ground. If the vine is growing on a tree, cut an 8-12 inch section out of the vine, taking care to not cut into the tree, and remove the cut section. Do not try to pull the entire vine out of the tree, as this can harm the tree. The stump of the vine should be treated with a 25-percent solution of glyphosate (brand name Rodeo) by carefully painting the cut area, using a sponge applicator or a bottle with a dauber tip.

Need Help Identifying Invasive Plants? “iNaturalist” is a free app available on a smartphone. When the app is opened, the phone’s camera can be used to take pictures of any plant or creature, and the app will give suggestions as to what it might be.

This handout is provided by the Cooper Creek Park Restoration Project in Roeland Park, KS, and includes information from the Missouri Invasive Plant Council’s article found here:

<https://moinvasives.org/2021/02/18/2021-top-invasive-plants-expanding-in-missouri/>

To Contact the Missouri Invasive Plant Council (MoIP):

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