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Bushkiller (*Cayratia japonica*)

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Origin:

Bushkiller originates from the forests of Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, India and Australia. Currently it is found in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and North Carolina.

Description:

Bushkiller is a perennial herbaceous vine in the grape family (*Vitaceae*) that will climb up trees and other supports. This vine has five leaflets per leaf, with the middle leaflet on its own stem. Leaves can be up to 3 inches wide and 3 inches long, and usually no smaller than 1/2 inch wide and 1 inch long. The leaflets are ovate with dentate margins, with silvery-white coloration on the lower surface. Clusters of white, red

and yellow flowers appear in the late summer and produce round, grape-like berries with 2-4 seeds. It can reproduce by seed or rhizome, but seeds are less likely to be viable the further north the plant is found. Bushkiller could be confused with Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), as both plants have five leaflets, but the middle leaflet on Virginia creeper does not contain its own stem.

Habitat:

Bushkiller tends to invade in disturbed areas such as fallow fields, residential areas, overgrazed pastures and harvested forests. It will also grow in flood plains.

Environmental Impact:

This fast-growing vine will climb existing native plants and either stress the plant by breaking branches due to its weight, or block the sunlight for native plants. It can also act as a “ladder” in forest fires, letting the fire climb higher than normal, causing more damage.



Control Methods:

This plant can be hand-pulled, but all root material must be removed for the treatment to be successful. Bush-killer can re-sprout from any rhizome left in the soil. Removed vegetation should not be composted, as it can also re-sprout from buried stems. Application of heavy mulch to plants that have not started climbing will result in dormancy, but the plant may re-sprout the following year.

Cutting the stems and brushing the cut surface with a systemic herbicide such as imazapyr or glyphosate can be effective. A foliar application of triclopyr at 2 lb ai/A has also been found to be effective. Please visit <http://hortweeds.tennessee.edu/webapp/test/Default.aspx> for assistance in finding the appropriate herbicide product.

Alternative Plants:

Bushkiller is not sold in the nursery industry; however, if you are interested in planting a woody vine you may want to consider the following native species:

- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
- Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)
- Moonseed (*Menispermum canadense*)
- Virgin's bower (*Clematis virginiana*)

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