

## Forest Restoration: Identify and Control Invasive Species

### Kudzu

#### Identification



Kudzu leaves



Kudzu monster, burying an entire house

As you can see above, what starts off as an innocent looking leaf can morph into a beast that chokes out native plants and houses alike. Kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*) was introduced to the US from Asia in 1876 for use as animal fodder, to help prevent soil erosion, and as an ornamental vine. It seemed to like the soil in the southeast US, quickly taking root and spreading via its rhizome network. It grew so rapidly that it ate up fields and neighborhoods and became known by many colorful names: the “foot-a-night vine” or the “vine-that-ate-the-South.” It grows that quickly.

#### Control

- If it's in your own yard, you can hire someone to professionally spray kudzu. If you want to do it yourself, you can spray kudzu leaves with Brush-B-Gon between July and early October. You will need to repeat this for at least 3-5 years. Brush-B-Gon will kill everything but grass, and cannot be used near water. You can cut the vines out of trees, and “stump treat” the cut surface at the ground. Follow the herbicide label for directions on mixing chemical for spraying leaves, and stump treatment.
- If it's in your neighbor's yard, explain the above method to them and offer your help. Until you eradicate kudzu from your neighbor's yard, it will continue to creep into your yard, so the time you spend helping them will save you time in the future. If you are in the city of Atlanta, allowing kudzu to grow on your property is illegal. Call code enforcement at (404) 330-6190 to talk with an enforcement officer.
- If kudzu is growing in a public place, contact your elected officials and tell them you want them to make it a priority to save trees by controlling kudzu. Without the support of the people that write the budget, there will never be money available to do the work.
- Kudzu takes years of repeated spraying to eradicate. There is no silver bullet; persistence is the key to winning this battle.

## English Ivy

### Identification



English Ivy leaf



English ivy engulfing trees and ground vegetation

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is native to Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa. It spreads easily by wind, sprouts by root and from every leaf node as well as by seed, and greatly resists eradication. Even pulling by hand often fails, as stems break off, leaving sprouting sources behind. English Ivy weakens trees by stealing sunlight, water, and nutrients. It can add up to one ton of extra weight to tree limbs and trunks; it can also act like a sail, causing trees to blow over in storms. Unfortunately, it has no natural enemies, at least not in the American south. It escapes from yards into our forests and out-competes our precious native plants, creating vast ivy wastelands that serve as breeding grounds and hiding places for rats, snakes, and mosquitoes.

### Control

- Don't buy it or plant it. Inspect your yard for invasive ivy. Don't let it get near the trees; cut it back at least 4 feet from base.
- Pull it up or spray it with a 5% Roundup herbicide solution.
- Plant other, native groundcovers such as Allegheny Spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*) or Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) instead.
- Remember, ivy will outlive you, and someday it will be out of your control – so it's best to just get rid of it now.

## Chinese Privet

### Identification



Chinese Privet



Chinese Privet bush with flowers

Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) is an abundant semi-evergreen small tree or large shrub, most commonly found invading the understory of moist areas. It was introduced into the United States in the early 1800s. Commonly used as an ornamental shrub for hedgerows, privet quickly escaped cultivation and is currently widespread throughout all of Georgia. Though it can invade a wide variety of habitats, privet prefers moist open lands. It commonly forms dense thickets in fields or in the forest understory. Privet reproduces both by sprouts and by an abundance of seeds, which are dispersed by birds and mammals. It shades and out-competes many native species and, once established, is very difficult to remove. Unfortunately, it remains widely sold in the nursery and gardening industry.

### Control

- It is recommended that you contact your local agricultural extension specialist for control measures pertinent to your area.
- For small areas and for relatively small plants, hand removal is effective. Digging tools such as a mattock are useful for removing underground parts. Broken root fragments need to be removed because of their ability to re-sprout. Repeated mowing and cutting will control the spread of privet, but will not eradicate it. Stems should be cut as close to the ground as possible.
- For larger natural areas where the use of chemical herbicides is inadvisable, enlisting numerous helpers to mechanically remove Chinese privet may be required. Using heavy equipment for large-scale removal may be appropriate in some locations, but the negative effects of soil disturbance and the potential for erosion need to be considered.
- Herbicide treatments properly applied can selectively remove invasive species with minimal soil disturbance. Even slight soil disturbance may offer opportunities for re-invasion. When considering chemical control, local laws affecting herbicide use must be observed. Appropriate precautions in various habitats may be needed. Not all herbicides are appropriate for all areas; some may damage non-target species. Herbicides will behave differently in different environments and under different conditions; for example, they may degrade more slowly in wetter, more anaerobic soils or move downward in sandier soils. A careful monitoring program is essential for evaluating herbicide use.