



Missouri Environment & Garden

Honeysuckles: For Better or For Worse

by David Trinklein

The honeysuckles are a group of vigorous woody vines and shrubs that can be grown nearly anywhere. As a rule, they produce abundant foliage, flowers and fruit, and are nearly indestructible. The latter also explains why certain species of honeysuckle can quickly get out of control and become a pest in the landscape.

Honeysuckles belong to the genus *Lonicera*, which contains about 180 identified species. Most are native to the Orient although native species do exist in Europe, India and North America. The common name honeysuckle is derived from the sweet nectar which can be sucked from their flowers.

The term honeysuckle most often is associated with twining, woody vines. The latter can be good or bad. The bad reputation of honeysuckle has been earned by only a few species, the most notorious of which is Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*). Hall's honeysuckle is a commonly-grown cultivar of Japanese honeysuckle. Youngsters love this plant because the sweet nectar that can be sucked from its flowers; most adults despise it because of its invasive tendencies.

Planted with good intentions, Japanese honeysuckle often becomes a weedy, twining vine that can grow from 15 to 30 feet in length. It was introduced into the eastern United States from the Orient in the early 19th century and has spread into many native areas since that time. Although a serious pest in many areas, it has become especially problematic in the southeastern part of the United States. Japanese honeysuckle bears semi-evergreen leaves and produces very fragrant flowers that change from white to yellow as they mature. Except for its tendency to become weedy, it can be very attractive.

Japanese honeysuckle no longer is recommended for landscape planting, since it easily gets out of control and becomes a nuisance. Left uncontrolled when located near shrubs and small trees, the plant vines over them and can choke them out. Birds spread its seeds by eating its berries and starting the plant under trees, along fences or other places birds might frequent.



Fortunately, not all vining honeysuckles are as vigorous and invasive as Japanese honeysuckle. The scarlet trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) is a better choice for climbing the likes of a fence or trellis. While it may grow up to 20 feet or more in length, it is not nearly as vigorous as Japanese honeysuckle. Additionally, it does not produce abundant seeds that, subsequently, can be spread by birds. Its trumpet-shaped, red flowers are very

(continued on pg. 2)

In This Issue

Honeysuckles: For Better or For Worse	1
Organic pest management showcased at Lincoln University Field day - June 9th, 2016	3
June Gardening Calendar	4



(continued from page 1)

attractive to hummingbirds which gives the plant additional summer interest.

Arguably the best choice for a vining honeysuckle is Brown's honeysuckle (*Lonicera x brownii*). As its scientific name implies, it is a hybrid that has scarlet trumpet honeysuckle as one of its parents. 'Dropmore Scarlet' is a popular cultivar of Brown's honeysuckle that is valued for its scarlet-red flowers produced over an extended period of time. Vigorous, yet not aggressive, it is a great choice for arbors and trellises. It, too, is very attractive to hummingbirds.

No doubt the most useful honeysuckles in the landscape are the shrub honeysuckles. The latter include species which produce large plants that make attractive screens, hedges, or large specimen plants. One of the most common in this group is Tatarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartarica*). Native to Siberia, it grows about 10 feet tall and equally wide when left unpruned. It bears red to pink flowers that later fade to white, depending upon cultivar. Its fruits are a red berry that ripens in June or early July and are a favorite food of birds. Although the plant cannot be considered nearly as serious a pest as Japanese honeysuckle, the abundant berries it produces contain seeds which are spread by birds, causing it to become weedy in some areas.

Winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) is another shrub-type honeysuckle that makes a good hedge or screen. It grows fairly quickly to a height of six to 10 feet and bears fragrant white flowers in very late winter or early spring, making it a pleasant harbinger of spring. Although it lacks other outstanding qualities, it is easy to grow in many types of soils and exposures.

Honeysuckles thrive in full sun, but will tolerate partial sun and light, afternoon shade. As a rule, shrub honeysuckles are intolerant of poorly-drained, wet soils to the point they eventually will weaken and die in such locations. Contrastingly, they are very tolerant of

dry soils and can compete well with the roots of trees and other large shrubs. They can, however, overpower smaller plants and shrubs.

When honeysuckles become overgrown, they can be cut back to ground level with little adverse effects. New shoots quickly will develop and regenerate a new plant. Shrub honeysuckles that have been cut back often produce so many shoots from the root system that they must be thinned to allow only a few shoots to remain. As they grow and develop, these new shoots can be pruned to control the size and shape the plant.



Other honeysuckles of interest include the goldflame honeysuckle (*Lonicera x heckrottii*) which continues to bloom throughout the summer. Its flowers are pink on the outside and yellow on the inside and are exquisitely fragrant. For gardeners who want bluish-green color in their landscape, the Morrow honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowi*) is a good choice. It bears creamy white flowers followed by red fruit on a dense, somewhat-tangled shrub that may achieve a mature height of six feet.

Conversely, Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) and bella honeysuckle (*Lonicera x bella*) are considered by most states as noxious, invasive plants that should be avoided. Both are erect, shrub honeysuckles native to Asia that tend to invade a wide variety of habitats. The result is the establishment of a monoculture that quickly crowds out native plants. Because of the affinity deer have for honeysuckle as a food source, research has shown a correlation between populations of Amur honeysuckle and tick-related diseases such as Lyme disease.

While it may be wise to avoid adding certain honeysuckles to your landscape, there are plenty of others have attractive flowers, pleasant fragrance and are easy-to-grow.

Organic pest management to be showcased at Lincoln University field day (June 9th, 2016)

by Jamie Pinero



Spotted Wing Drosophila trapping system

On June 9th, 2016, Lincoln University Cooperative Extension and Research will be hosting the annual Alan T. Busby Farm Organic Agriculture Field Day. This year seven workshops, most of which concern organic pest management, will be offered in the morning (cost: \$15, with lunch included). The seven workshops are: (1) Managing Internal Parasites of Goats, Sheep, and Cattle, (2) Organic Berry Production, (3) Organic Management of Spotted Wing Drosophila, (4) Predator Control for Small Ruminants, (5) Creating and Protecting Habitat for Native Pollinators, (6) Agroforestry and Mushroom Production, and (7) Disease Management in Organic Fruit and Vegetable Production.

The SWD workshop will emphasize monitoring and management of this invasive insect, and will include hands-on activities. Information about a cost-share program for producers to recover up to 50% of insecticide/exclusion netting costs will be provided. In addition, each participant will receive SWD specimens in vials with alcohol as reference material, fact sheets / guide sheets, and free traps and lures.

While the workshops and field day demonstrations will emphasize organic production, nearly all concepts and techniques that will be discussed can be implemented by non-organic producers.



Japanese Beetle trapping system

The keynote presentation by Dr. John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus-University of Missouri, is open to all (no charge) and begins at 1:00 pm.

Field Day tours are from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. Additional information about the field day demonstrations and online registration are available at: <http://www.lincolnu.edu/web/cooperative-research/busby-farm-ag-field-day>. A printable registration form is also available at the link above.

JUNE GARDENING CALENDAR

Category	Week				Activity	
	1	2	3	4		
Ornamentals	x				Deadhead bulbs and spring flowering perennials as blossoms fade.	
	x				Watch for bagworms feeding on many garden plants, but especially juniper and arborvitae.	
	x				Thin seedlings to proper spacings before plants crowd each other.	
		x	x	x	Plant tropical water lilies when water temperatures rise above 70 degrees.	
		x	x		When night temperatures stay above 50 degrees, bring houseplants outdoors for the summer.	
		x	x		Apply a balanced rose fertilizer after the first show of blooms is past.	
		x	x		Rhizomatous begonias are not just for shade. Many varieties, especially those with bronze foliage, do well in full sun if given plenty of water and a well-drained site.	
		x	x		Most houseplants brought outside prefer a bright spot shaded from afternoon sun. Check soil moisture daily during hot weather.	
		x	x		Apply organic mulches as the soil warms. These will conserve moisture, discourage weeds, and enrich the soil as they decay.	
		x	x		Apply a second spray for borer control on hardwood trees.	
				x	x	Softwood cuttings can be taken from trees and shrubs as the spring flush of growth is beginning to mature.
				x	x	Continue spraying roses with a fungicide to prevent black spot disease.
				x	x	Tired of the same old foundation plantings? Find fresh ideas among the evergreens planted in the Dwarf Conifer collection.
				x	x	Trees and shrubs may still be fertilized before July 4th.
	Lawns			x	x	Pruning of spring flowering trees and shrubs should be completed before the month's end.
x		x	x	x	Water turf as needed to prevent drought stress.	
x		x	x	x	Mow lawns frequently enough to remove no more than one-third the total height per mowing. There is no need to remove clippings unless excessive.	
x		x	x	x	Gradually increase the mowing height of zoysia lawns throughout the summer. By September, the mowing height should be 2 to 2.5 inches.	
x		x	x	x	Mow bluegrass at 2 to 3.5 inch height. Turfgrasses growing in shaded conditions should be mowed at the higher recommendations.	
Vegetables	x	x			Zoysia can be fertilized now while actively growing. Do not exceed 2-3 pounds of actual nitrogen fertilizer per 1000 sq. ft. per year.	
	x	x			Repeat plantings of corn and beans to extend the harvest season.	
	x	x			Plant pumpkins now to have Jack-o-lanterns for Halloween.	
		x	x	x	As soon as cucumber and squash vines start to 'run,' begin spray treatments to control cucumber beetles and squash vine borers.	
		x	x	x	Set out transplants of Brussels sprouts started last month. These will mature for a fall harvest.	
		x	x	x	Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems make the most efficient use of water during dry times.	
		x	x	x	To minimize diseases, water with overhead irrigation early enough in the day to allow the foliage to dry before nightfall.	
		x	x		Start seedlings of broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower. These will provide transplants for the fall garden.	
		x			Stop harvesting asparagus when the spears become thin.	
			x	x	Control corn earworms. Apply several drops of mineral oil every 3 to 7 days once silks appear. Sprays of Bt are also effective.	

Gardening Calendar supplied by the staff of the William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening located at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri. (www.GardeningHelp.org)

JUNE GARDENING CALENDAR

Category	Week				Activity
	1	2	3	4	
Fruits			x		To maximize top growth on asparagus, apply 2 pounds of 12-12-12 fertilizer per 100 sq. ft., water well and renew mulches to conserve moisture.
	x				Oriental fruit moths emerge. They are most serious on peaches where the first generation attacks growing tips. Wilted shoots should be pruned out.
	x				Thinning overloaded fruit trees will result in larger and healthier fruits at harvest time. Thinned fruits should be a hands-width apart.
	x				Enjoy the strawberry harvest.
		x	x		Renovate strawberries after harvest. Mow the rows; thin out excess plants; remove weeds; fertilize and apply a mulch for weed control.
		x	x		Summer fruiting raspberries are ripening now.
		x	x		Begin control for apple maggot flies. Red painted balls that have been coated with tanglefoot may be hung in apple trees to trap egg-laying females.
Miscellaneous			x	x	Spray trunks of peach trees and other stone fruits for peach tree borers.
			x	x	Prune and train young fruit trees to eliminate poorly positioned branches and to establish proper crotch angles.
			x	x	When using any gas powered equipment, be sure to allow the engine a few minutes to cool before refilling empty fuel tanks.
			x	x	A mailbox mounted on a nearby post makes a handy place to store and keep dry any small tools, seeds, labels, etc. frequently used in the garden.

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