

Kudzu

Pueraria montana

Description

This plant is capable of nitrogen fixation. Not aggressive in Michigan to date but may become a greater risk as climate warms.

Habit

Perennial, aggressive semi-woody vine, forms dense mats covering trees and small buildings in southern states.

Leaves

Alternate, compound with 3 large leaflets; smooth leaf margins; may be hairy.

Stems

Young stems hairy, becoming smooth, brown; older stems up to 7.5 cm (3 in) in diameter; upright vines develop bark and annual rings, and overwinter, more robust than prostrate vines on



flat ground; may grow up to 18 m (60 ft) in one season.

Flowers

Reddish-purple in color, pea-like, grow on spikes in leaf axils up to 15 cm (6 in) long, fragrant; blooms August through September.

Fruits and Seeds

Dark brown, dry, clustered, flat, legume seed pods, up to 8 cm (3 in) long, covered with stiff golden-brown, spreading hairs, each with up to 9 seeds.

Habitat

Grows in full sun on a variety of soils; prefers deep loam.

Reproduction

By seed, root expansion and fragmentation; roots develop from nodes, forming root crowns every 1-2 square feet.

Similar

Hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*) has similar leaves, pale pink flowers in clusters, not spikes.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor open disturbed areas and forest edges. Hand pull young plants, removing entire root crown; remove all plant material from site and destroy. Mowing, grazing or tilling throughout growing season depletes root storage, weakens plant; most effective in conjunction with herbicide. Older infestations require higher herbicide concentrations; treat cut stems with herbicide; basal bark treatment effective;

foliar herbicide treatment also effective. Kudzu is fire resistant. As this species has rarely ventured into Michigan, it is important to document new occurrences. Please obtain flowering or fruiting specimens and submit to: Anton Reznicek, Curator (Vascular Plants), University of Michigan Herbarium, 3600 Varsity Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108-2287.

Credits

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