

Chinese yam

Dioscorea oppositifolia

Description

Economically valued as a food plant and is used as a traditional Chinese medicine.

Habit

Deciduous perennial, creeping and climbing vine, may reach up to 16 ft in height given support from trees and shrubs, twine left to right.

Leaves

Acute to acuminate with a cordate (heart-shaped) base, alternate or opposite in arrangement, 1.5-3 in long and up to 1.5 in wide with 7-9 veins. Margins, petioles and stems are purplish to red in color.

Stems

Smooth, creeping, climbing, twisting.

Flowers



Small, yellowish-white in color, arise from the axils of the leaves. The perianth is bell-shaped and the staminate (male) flowers are in bundles, spikes or panicles at the end of the branches.

May have a spicy fragrance similar to cinnamon.

Arrangement may be paniculate or spicate.

Fruits and Seeds

Seeds are borne in a three-angle membranous capsule.

Habitat

Native to China. Found in forests, stream sides, disturbed or undisturbed areas, roadsides, fencerows, waste places, and old home sites.

Reproduction

By seeds and by bulbil or small aerial tubers that are produced in the axils of the leaves. They are present from June to September.

Similar

Species of Greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.); Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*); and native wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Mowing or cutting will control the spread but will not eradicate it unless it is continued until the root reserves are exhausted. Grubbing methods are appropriate for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas. Mulching and use of several readily available general use herbicides

such as glyphosate or triclopyr.

Credits

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