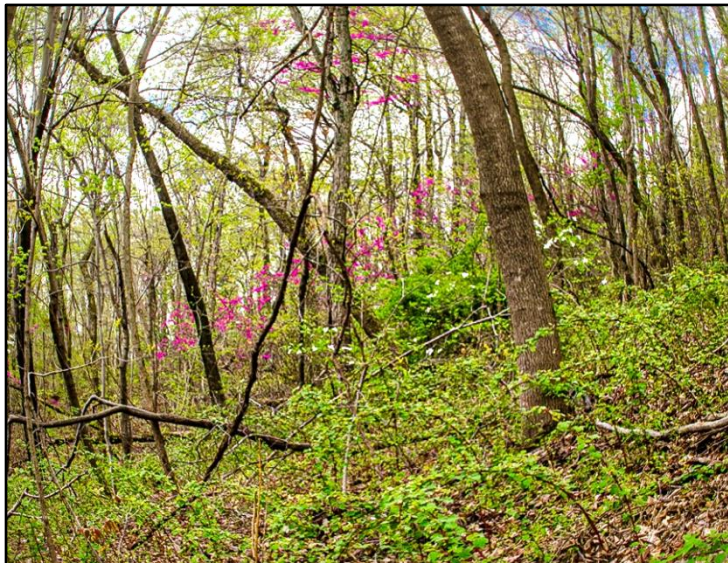


WINEBERRY or WINE RASPBERRY

Creates Impenetrable Thickets in Forests and Fields



Like many invasive plants, wineberry leafs out earlier in spring than native plants. All the shrubs in the forest understory shown here are wineberry taking over the forest floor. If not controlled, these prickly thickets can reach 6 to 9 feet high.

The Culprit

Wineberries are delicious – they taste like a seedy version of raspberries and people love to pick and eat them. Wildlife managers, naturalists, and those in the know may enjoy eating the juicy, sweet fruits, but nevertheless they hate to see the proliferation of wineberry plants. That’s because the prickly shrub is one of the most troublesome invasives destroying forests in the mountains and northern Piedmont. Wineberry plants can grow so thick and tall, reaching 6 to 9 feet high, that they prevent forest regeneration, obliterate wildflowers, and make it difficult, if not impossible, for hikers, hunters and wildlife to traverse infested forests and fields, snarling them up in tangles of hazardous branches.

Wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*) is an Asian relative of blackberries and raspberries -- all are in the genus *Rubus*. It was imported to North America in the 1890’s to be used as rootstock for raspberry breeding. The bramble escaped cultivation and now infests every state east of the Mississippi and Wisconsin and Arkansas. Wineberry is not very particular and tolerates a wide range of soil and light conditions, thriving in all but the densest shade. If not controlled, it forms impenetrable thickets of hazardous, prickly canes in forests, hedgerows, and open areas.

Known Hangouts

You’ll find wineberry hanging out in almost any habitat, from sunny to shady and moist to dry. It’s especially a problem in tree-fall areas in forests where the increased sunlight fuels its rapid growth. This unwelcome shrub grows most vigorously in moist soil and can become highly invasive and abundant in mesic (moist) hardwood forests, less so in drier forests. Wineberry establishes quickly along roadsides and streams and in hedgerows, fallow fields, and forest margins.

Modus Operandi

Wineberry is a perennial shrub with a fountainlike shape consisting of long arching canes (stems) that grow from a center crown. As with those of its raspberry and blackberry relatives, each cane lives only two years, but plants produce new canes every year. First-year canes are vegetative (do not flower). Second-year canes become woody with side branches that produce flowers and fruit, and then die. These are replaced by new first-year canes. The combination of living and dead, prickly canes adds to the viciousness of a wineberry thicket. The long flexible canes can grow roots where the tips of the arching stems touch the ground, allowing wineberry plants to rapidly “walk across” the landscape.

Birds, bears, and other creatures devour the sweet, red wineberries and then expel the undigested seeds all over the landscape, which furthers the invasive plant’s proliferation and escalates habitat destruction.



Wineberry plants produce copious amounts of juicy fruits in early summer, often around July 4th.

Positive Identification

Wineberry has compound green leaves made up of three oval leaflets with toothed edges and bristly red petioles (leaf stems); leaf undersides are silvery white. The leaves are arranged alternately along the canes, which may appear reddish because, besides having razor-sharp prickles, they are covered with needle-like, red or green hairs. *Rubus* members belong to the rose family and all have thornlike bristles and



The undersides of wineberry leaves are white and petioles are covered by prickly red hairs, making identification easy.

five-petaled flowers. Wineberry's flowers are small with pinkish petals and prominent green sepals. The fruits ripen over the course of a week in early summer, often around the Fourth of July.

Mistaken Identity

Common blackberry (*Rubus allegheniensis*) might be confused with wineberry because it has prickly canes and similar summer fruits. Its early summer flowers are showier and bright white. Leaves on first-year canes are 3-parted and on second-year canes 5-parted; leaf undersides are light green not white. Blackberry fruits ripen from green to reddish to dark purple-black around the time wineberry ripens, but the glossy black fruits continue to develop for several more weeks beyond wineberry's harvest. Both species have vicious prickles, but blackberry stems lack wineberry's additional dense, sharp hairs on canes and leaf petioles. Blackberry's canes may have green or red-brown bark and form impenetrable thickets, but usually only in sunny locations.



Blackberry fruits are glossy black when ripe and have a solid center.



Wineberry fruits are glossy red when ripe and have a hollow center.

Control

If you grew up picking and enjoying wineberries, you may find it unthinkable to consider eradicating the plants. Nevertheless, consider how pervasive the thorny invasive shrub has become and find motivation through knowing you're benefiting the environment by removing them.

You can battle wineberry several ways, but whichever method you use, when working amongst the thorns, wear long sleeves and tough pants as well as sturdy gloves; elbow-length, leather rose-gloves prove useful. It can take several years to get rid of these prickly shrubs; birds and other animals may bring in seeds from neighboring land to start new infestations, so the battle may not be decisive.

Manual & Mechanical Methods: Depending on soil moisture, canes up to 6 feet long can be hand-pulled. Use your foot to push the canes away from you, stomp them down,



Wineberry seedlings can be hand-pulled from moist soil or sprayed with a foliar herbicide.

then pull by grabbing canes at ground level and pulling steadily. If they won't budge, use a garden fork or mattock to pry them out by inserting a pronged garden fork at an angle

under the plant's crown, then press the fork's handle down to uproot the crown. If using a mattock, hit the ground a few inches on the far side of the cane and pry up. Remove as much of the root system as possible to prevent resprouting. Wineberry can be removed by all of these methods any time of year.

Cut Stump Method: Cut wineberry canes near ground level and spray the cut stump immediately using a concentrated herbicide that you have diluted to 20% strength and stored in a labeled, handheld squirt bottle. It's helpful to work in a team of two: one person stomps and cuts the canes and the other sprays the cut stems.

Foliar Spray: From early summer into fall, use a foliar spray on seedlings, sprouts and mature plants. When spraying large wineberry, it's difficult to avoid harming desirable plants because its stems extend so widely. Instead, cut-stump canes or cut them near the ground and spray new foliage growth a month or so later.

For currently approved herbicide recommendations, check the Virginia Department of Forestry chart *Non-Native Invasive Plant Species Control Treatments*, which you can download from the Blue Ridge PRISM website.