

Second Edition 2015

PENNSYLVANIA'S FIELD GUIDE TO

**AQUATIC  
INVASIVE  
SPECIES**



# JAPANESE HOP

*Humulus japonicus*



## SPECIES AT A GLANCE

Japanese hop is a fast-growing, herbaceous, annual climbing vine and member of the hemp family. It can climb to heights of 3 m (10 ft) or more with the help of many small hooked prickles that cover the stem and can cause irritation to bare skin.

## IDENTIFICATION

**Leaves:** **Opposite, palmate** leaves are approximately 5-10 cm (2-3.9 in) in length and have rough, **serrated** edges. They are divided into 5-9 lobes with downward pointed prickles and down-curved **bracts** at their base. The down curved **bracts** and sharp prickles are distinguishing characteristics of this plant.

**Flowers:** Because they lack petals and are green in color, the flowers can be inconspicuous. They bloom in clusters about 5 cm (2 in) in length in early to mid-summer.

**Fruit/Seeds:** Green hops produced by female plants contain oval, yellowish-brown seeds, which can remain viable for up to three years.

**Stems/Roots:** Rough stems, which are covered in tiny hooked hairs, can reach 2.4-11 m (8-35 ft) in length and help the plant climb.

## SIMILAR SPECIES

May be confused with common hop (*Humulus lupulus*), which typically has three-lobed leaves, with upper leaves occasionally lacking lobes altogether. Unlike Japanese hop, the leaf stems of common hop are shorter than the leaves.

## HABITAT

Japanese hop grows dense, nearly continuous stands in floodplain areas along river and stream banks; along roadsides, open fields, and woodlands; or wherever soil is moist. It can grow in full sun or shade and in sandy, clay, acidic, or neutral soil.

## SPREAD

Along with spread from intentional introductions, seeds dispersed by wind and moving water can help Japanese hop multiply.

## DISTRIBUTION

Native to Japan and eastern China, Japanese hop was introduced to the United States as an ornamental garden plant and is now growing in the Great Lakes area and surrounding states. In Pennsylvania, it is found in many counties spanning the state.

## Environmental Impacts

Japanese hop can form dense, almost solid stands that outcompete native vegetation. It can be removed by hand pulling before the seeds ripen (August through September), but protection is needed (gloves, etc.) as irritation and blistering can occur from the hooked hairs covering the vines.

Pennsylvania Distribution



United States Distribution

