



Chinese Yam *Dioscorea oppositifolia* L.

Common Names: Chinese yam, cinnamon vine, air potato

Native Origin: China

Description: Chinese yam is a deciduous perennial creeping and climbing vine in the wild yam family (dioscoreaceae) that may reach up to 16 feet in height given support from trees and shrubs. The vines twine from left to right. The leaves are acute to acuminate with a cordate (heart-shaped) base. Leaves can be alternate or opposite in arrangement on the stem. Typically, leaves are 1.5 to 3 inches long and up to 1.5 inches wide with 7 to 9 veins. The margins, petioles and stems are purplish to red in color. The small yellowish-white flowers 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. Flowers may have a spicy fragrance similar to cinnamon. Arrangement may be paniculate or spicate. Bulbils or small aerial tubers are produced in the axils of the leaves. The seeds are borne in a three angle membranous capsule.



Habitat: It grows in rich alluvial soils along streams, seasonal creeks and rivers. It can tolerate semi-xeric sites with rocky soils. It grows in full sun and can tolerate all but the deepest shade. Habitat includes forests, stream sides, disturbed or undisturbed areas, roadsides, fencerows, waste places, and old home sites.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in DC, KY, MD, MO, SC, TN, VA, and WV.

Ecological Impacts: Chinese Yam spreads easily into native plant communities and displaces native vegetation.

Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Mowing or cutting will control the spread of Chinese yam, but will not eradicate it unless it is continued until the root reserves are exhausted. The grubbing method is appropriate for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas. Mulching is an effective control on small infestations or in areas where herbicides cannot be used.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr. The most effective time to treat plants is after the leaves are fully expanded but before the aerial tubers are ripe. Follow label and state requirements.



Infestation covering trees

References: <http://plants.usda.gov>, www.exoticpestplantcouncil.org, www.invasive.org, www.se-epcc.org/states/TN/TNList.html, Czarapeta, Elizabeth J., *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control*, 2005. p. 127, www.forestryimages.org