Invasive: Wineberry
(Rubus phoenicolasius Maxim.)

by Larraine Van Slooten

Wineberry was introduced to the U.S. in the 1890s from China, Korea and Japan to be used as breeding stock for commercial raspberries. By the 1970s it had invaded most states east of the Mississippi River. It is listed as a prohibited invasive in New York State. The greatest concentration of wineberry in New York is on Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley, but infestations have been found north along the Hudson Valley, in the Adirondacks and in the Finger Lakes region.

In the same genus (Rubus) as blackberries and raspberries, wineberry grows canes up to 9 ft. long. Leaves are alternate with three heart-shaped leaflets per leaf that are green on top with undersides covered with densely matted white wooly hairs. Its branches, petioles and sepals are densely covered with tiny red hairs and sharp spines. Small five-petaled white flowers open in May followed by red raspberry-like fruits in June and July. The fruits are covered by the sepals until they are nearly ripe. This characteristic as well as having three leaflets with green & white leaves rather than five or seven with all green leaves is what differentiates wineberry from native blackberry species. The red hairs on its stems and the fruit covered until ripe with the flower sepals are unique to wineberry.

Wineberry grows best in moist soil areas in full sun to partial shade. It grows more aggressively than native raspberry and blackberry species in forests, fields, wastelands, along forest and wetland edges and on roadsides. By forming dense thickets, it chokes the understory of a forest and replaces native species as well as disturbing habitats for wildlife. Wineberry reproduces by seed that is spread by animals and vegetatively by root buds as well as by plants sprouting where cane tips touch the ground.

To manually control a small growth of wineberry hand pull the plants when the soil is moist and bag branches with berries. An infested area can also be mowed several times a year. Both methods must be repeated for a few years to eliminate re-growth. A chemical control involves spraying the leaves or painting the cut stumps with an approved systemic herbicide.

Cornell University Cooperative Extension Erie County

Master Gardener Cornell Cooperative Extension

21 South Grove Street
East Aurora, NY 14052