

Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Office  
206 N. Griffith, Suite A  
El Dorado, Kansas 67042

## **THE GRAPEVINE**

Larry Crouse  
Extension Horticulture Agent

**FOR RELEASE: November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

## **WHAT'S THE "WILD" SHRUB WITH BRIGHT RED BERRIES?**

People from this part of the state and on east have been reporting shrubs with bright red berries growing wild. The berries are clustered around the stem and the leaves are still a bright green color. These are likely one of two species of bush honeysuckle, (Amur or Tartarian), which can get 6-20 feet tall. This landscape shrub has become a serious understory invasive throughout the midwest from eastern Kansas to Ohio. Many states have it on their noxious weeds list. All of our native honeysuckles are vines, similar to the vining Japanese honeysuckle. Bush honeysuckles are also noticeable in the spring as they put out leaves much earlier than most other trees and shrubs. Leaves also stay green much later into the fall. This long growing season gives it a competitive advantage over other native species, and the vigorous growth can take over a woodland understory, reducing the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs. Hunters and hikers are all too familiar with these path choking, understory dominating masses of foliage. If you want to promote native species on your property, and also not get your area so choked up with growth that you can't walk through it, then controlling bush honeysuckles is a must. Honeysuckle seedlings can be readily hand pulled when the soil is damp. Chemical control is needed for larger infestations, as cutting alone results in vigorous resprouting. Foliar applications of glyphosate (i.e., Roundup) in late summer and fall works well as does applications of Crossbow (2,4-D + triclopyr). Treating cut stumps with Tordon RTU (picloram), or concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate is also quite effective. Several studies have shown basal spraying with triclopyr (Garlon) not to be effective, while basal applications with 2,4-D or picloram products work well, using an oil carrier to penetrate the bark. Cut stump and basal treatments can be done when the areas to be sprayed are dry and not frozen. Please follow all label instructions when using pesticides.

### ***Compost Pile Maintenance***

Compost piles should be turned about once per month even during the winter months. This will ensure the composting process continues and that all materials are equally composted. A compost pile is "turned" when uncomposted material is moved from the sides and tops of the pile to the center where it provides "fuel" for the microorganisms that break it down. Water may need to be added if the material you move to the center is dry. Check the moisture content by squeezing a fistful in your hand. It should feel moist but no excess water should drip out. Compress the material in the pile as best you can as excess air can slow the composting process.

### ***Dormant Seeding of Turfgrass***

The best time to seed cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass is September because the turf has more time to mature before spring crabgrass germination and

the heat stress of summer. Dormant seeding of turfgrass is sometimes used to help fill in bare spots of lawns that weren't overseeded in the fall. Dormant overseeding is done during the winter (December - February) when it is much too cold for germination. As with any seeding program, good seed-soil contact is vital. Several methods can be used. One method is to seed when there has been a light snowfall of up to an inch. This is shallow enough that bare spots can still be seen. Spread seed by hand on areas that need thickening up. As the snow melts, it brings the seed into good contact with the soil where it will germinate in the spring. Another method is relies on the surface of the soil being moist followed by freezing weather. As moist soil freezes and thaws, small pockets are formed on the wet, bare soil that is perfect for catching and holding seed. As the soil dries, the pockets collapse and cover the seed. A third method involves core aerating, verticutting or hand raking and broadcasting seed immediately after. Of course, the soil must be dry enough and unfrozen for this to be practical. With any of the above methods, seed germinates in the spring as early as possible. There will be limitations on what herbicides can be used for weed control. Tupersan (siduron) can be used as a crabgrass preventer on new seedings even before they have come up. Also dithiopyr, found in Hi-Yield Turf and Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper, can be used on tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass two weeks after germination. Dithiopyr is longer lasting and more effective than siduron. Other preemergence herbicides available to homeowners require that the turf be well established before application.

### ***Ice Melters***

There are five main materials that are used as chemical de-icers: calcium chloride, sodium chloride (table salt), potassium chloride, urea, and calcium magnesium acetate. Calcium chloride is the traditional ice-melting product. Though it will melt ice to about -25 degrees F, it will form slippery, slimy surfaces on concrete and other hard surfaces. Plants are not likely to be harmed unless excessive amounts are used. Rock salt is sodium chloride and is the least expensive material available. It is effective to approximately 12 degrees F but can damage soils, plants and metals. Potassium chloride can also cause serious plant injury when washed or splashed on foliage. Both calcium chloride and potassium chloride can damage roots of plants. Urea (carbonyl diamide) is a fertilizer that is sometimes used to melt ice. Though it is only about 10% as corrosive as sodium chloride, it can contaminate ground and surface water with nitrates. Urea is effective to about 21 degrees F. Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA), a newer product, is made from dolomitic limestone and acetic acid (the principal compound of vinegar). CMA works differently than the other materials in that it does not form a brine like salt but rather helps prevent snow particles from sticking to each other or the road surface. It has little effect on plant growth or concrete surfaces. Performance decreases below 20 degrees F.

Limited use of any of these products should cause little injury. Problems accumulate when they are used excessively and there is not adequate rainfall to wash or leach the material from the area. Since limited use is recommended it is best to remove the ice and snow by hand when possible. When they are applied, practice moderation. Resist the temptation to over apply just to make sure the ice and snow melts. Keep in mind this can damage concrete surfaces as well as the plants and grass growing along the walks and driveways. These problems are normally latent and do not show up until spring or summer.

Larry E. Crouse  
Butler County Horticulture Agent  
K-State Research & Extension