Invasive Plant Alert[1]

Himalayan berry

Rubus bifrons Vest ex Tratt.
(Also known as *R. armeniacus*, *R. discolor*, or *R. procerus*.)

Known also as Himilayan or European blackberry, *R. bifrons* is a growing threat in the Southeast and has been reported in the Mid-Atlantic. It can establish dense stands that crowd out native blackberries and other vegetation.

Figure 1 Floral display of R. bifrons. John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org

Where to Look

Rubus bifrons is native to Europe and has become increasingly widespread in the United States. Its geographic distribution covers the southeastern states (AL, AR, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX), the Mid-Atlantic (DC, MA, MD, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA), the Northwest (northern California to Canada), and also Missouri and Oklahoma. It was first reported in Virginia in 2010, followed by reports it had extended to Maryland in 2011. In our region it has been found int Fort Dupont Park.

Rubus bifrons is mostly found in coastal and riparian areas, pastures, vacant lands, open areas, woodland areas, tree farms, and roadsides.

Identifying the Plant

R. bifrons is a perennial evergreen shrub with thick arching stems and large thorns. Its leaves are large, rounded to oblong, toothed, and in usually groups of five. The plant's floral display is attractive, with clusters of small white to pink flowers. The green fruits ripen to red then black in late summer, and are edible.

Figure 2 Edible fruit of R. bifrons. Andrea Moro - Berlin, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Germania

Rubus bifrons looks similar to the native Allegheny (or common) blackberry (*R. allegheniensis*) and can be distinguished because the native is smaller, has only three leaflets, and grows along the ground. It also looks like the non-native cutleaf blackberry (*R. laciniatus*). That species has more deeply cut leaves.

How to get rid of it?

Control is difficult. Plants can be pulled or dug up or removed mechanically by removing the roots. However, treating the canes with a systemic herbicide may be more effective. There are no reported biological controls for this plant.

Figure 3 Arching stems of the R. bifrons shrub. Andrea Moro - Berlin, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Germania

Figure 4 Toothed leaflets of R. bifrons, clustered in groups of five. Andrea Moro - Berlin, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Germania

Resources

Information and photos are by permission of the Institute for Applied Ecology, and from its *Field Guide to Weeds of the Oregon Coast* (2012)
http://appliedeco.org/invasive-species-resources/weed-guides/

[1] This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region

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