

May 2018 Plant of the Month



Lonicera maackii Ait. (Rupr.) Maxim, Amur River Honeysuckle

May's *Plant of the Month* is a non-native shrub that is persistent and widespread in New Jersey. *Lonicera maackii* is native to Southeastern Russia in the Amur River valley. The name *maackii* is applied in of honor the Russian Botanist Maack. Richard Maack explored this remote mountainous region in the late 19th century, specifically the Amur River near the Chinese Manchurian border. The Amur honeysuckle is found in North America on disturbed land, abandoned agricultural land and urban landscapes. The plant does not tolerate moisture, and is usually on upland environments. The shrub is spread by birds that eat the berries throughout the fall and winter seasons.

Lonicera maackii is a deciduous shrub reaching 5 meters. The plant was introduced into North America around 1900 specifically for its spring white flowers, its red berries present in fall, and its long lasting dark green leaves that fall late in autumn. This species differs from other shrub honeysuckles (*Lonicera tartarica*, *L. morrowii*) by its leaf shape, flower peduncles, and flower color. This shrub has a distinct trunk marked by furrows and a ragged, slightly exfoliating bark.

Amur honeysuckle is an invasive shrub. It forms dense colonies that shade native species, and provide few benefits other than seeds and structure to our woodlands. Chinese medicine uses a decoction of this and *Forsythia* to treat a number of ailments. Its introduction 115 years ago has provided enough time for this plant to establish throughout New Jersey and much of the eastern United States with the exception of the Pine Barrens and southern Oak Pine forest.

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