

CHINESE YAM

[*Dioscorea oppositifolia* L.]

DIOP



Fig. 1

UGA 2120016



Fig. 2

UGA 1237002

Problem: A native of China,^{2,6} Chinese yam or cinnamon vine, was introduced to the United States in the 1800s as an ornamental and edible food crop.⁶ It is a fast growing, twining vine⁶ that has the ability to rapidly invade pristine habitats and decrease native species richness and abundance by outcompeting and eliminating native plant species.^{5,6} Chinese yam's rapid mat-forming habit (Fig. 1) thickly blankets and weighs down all adjacent vegetation, breaking branches of large trees and shrubs as well as competitively excluding light.⁶

Habit: Perennial,² twining vine.^{3,4,6}

Reproduction: Axillary tubers² or bulbils that resemble small potatoes (Figs. 3 and 4).¹ It has a fast rate of vegetative growth and a prolific rate of asexual reproduction via bulbils.^{3,5,6}

Leaves: Usually opposite, but can be alternate or in whorls of 3 along the upper stem.² Leaves are simple, heart-shaped with 7-9 prominent, parallel veins^{2,4} and are generally 4 to 8 cm long (1 ½ to 3 in) (Fig. 2).⁶

Stems: Slender, round stem; twines clockwise.^{2,6}

Flowers: May-August³; small, greenish-white;² unisexual and arise from the leaf axils in spikes;² inconspicuous; cinnamon scented.^{3,4}

Fruits/Seeds: In native range, a flat, 3-winged, papery capsule;^{2,4} sexual reproduction by seed has not been

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Fig. 3 UGA 5330032

Fig. 4

UGA 1237053

documented in North America.⁶

Habitat: Most common on streambanks and floodplain forests; also found along roadsides, fencerows and drainage ditches.⁶ Tolerates full sun to full shade, but prefers nutrient rich soils.^{3,6}

Similar Species: The native wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa* L.) (Fig. 5) twines counter-clockwise,² exhibits pubescence

on the upper leaf surfaces³ and does not produce axial bulbils. It also produces seeds (Fig. 6). Greenbriar species such as roundleaf greenbriar



Fig. 5 © 2004 S. J. Baskauf



Fig. 6 UGA 1342077

(*Smilax rotundifolia* L.) (Fig. 7), have a similar leaf shape, but exhibit blue to black berries, do not produce axial bulbils, have and bear stipules or tendrils for climbing.² In addition, most *Smilax* species are armed with thorns.²



Fig. 7

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