

# BITTERSWEET

(CELASTRUS ORBICULATUS)

## 2019 Status in Maine:

Widespread. Severely Invasive. Perennial, deciduous, woody vine. Twines around mature trees and climbs into canopy, or spreads over low-growing vegetation.

## Identify

**Leaves:** Alternate, round with wavy/toothed edges. More pointed near the end of vine or in full sun. Turn yellow in fall.

**Flowers:** Small, green/yellow, 5 petals. Found where leaves meet stem, occur down the length of the vine. Bloom in June.

**Fruit:** Immature fruit are green and circular, maturing in the fall to an orange-red color with a yellow covering. Often last on vine into winter. Male plants do not produce fruit.

**Bark:** When mature the vine bark is light brown with lighter tan raised lenticels. The roots are bright orange.

## Location

Moderately shade-tolerant but most productive in sun. Tolerates dry to moist soils and can be found in a variety of habitats including forests, forest edges, fields, beaches, and dunes.

**Parks of concern:** Hinckley Park, Greenbelt, Willard Beach, Fisherman's Point, Trout Brook Nature Preserve, Wainwright, Thomas Knight Park, Bug Light Park, Pierce Street Park.

## Problem

This plant has a high reproduction rate and seeds can be spread long distances by animals. It strangles trees and shrubs, eventually killing them.

**How it spreads:** The fruits are eaten and dispersed by birds and small mammals. Can also be spread by the careless disposal of bittersweet wreaths. Seeds are viable up to 1 year. New shoots may also sprout from root crown or root fragments.

## Management

Small plants can be pulled when the soil is moist. Larger vines can be cut, but this must be done several times during the growing season for several years as the plant can re-sprout. Care should be taken to dry or burn all plant parts before disposal.

