

# Kudzu Vine

One of Ontario's Most

# UN-WANTED

Invasive Plant Species



LEAF

- KUDZU VINE (*PUERARIA MONTANA*)  
ALIAS: THE VINE THAT ATE THE SOUTH

## PROFILE

Kudzu vine is a semi-woody, perennial, climbing vine that is a member of the pea family (*Fabaceae*). It is native to eastern Asia and was first brought to the United States in 1876 for a Centennial exhibition, and later promoted as a forage crop and planted widely along highways for erosion control. It has recently been found in southwestern Ontario, near Leamington<sup>1</sup>; this is the first known report of this plant in Canada.

It is an aggressive invader, spreading mostly by vegetative means (a rhizomatous root system and runners) and can produce up to 30 vines from a single root system. Kudzu also produces seeds, of which few are viable; if the seeds are actually viable they may take several years to germinate.

## MUG SHOT

The leaves are compound and alternate, with 3 leaflets per leaf. The leaflets can be either entire or deeply lobed with a hairy margin, and are generally between 7-25cm (2.5-11 in) long. The vine is woody in appearance, has white pits in the bark, can reach diameters of up to 10cm (4 in), and weigh up to 45kg (100 lbs). When cutting Kudzu, the vine gives off the smell of menthol, and feels spongy instead of woody. Kudzu is similar to the native species Hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*), the most distinguishing characteristic is that Hog-peanut does not climb into tree crowns and only grows to be about 3 feet long. It may also be mistaken for another native species, Riverbank grape (*Vitis riparia*). Riverbank grape also has a tendency to climb into the canopy and cover trees and small woodlands. The best way to tell the difference between these species is that the bark of the Riverbank grape will often have a shredded appearance, whereas Kudzu bark is smooth.



FLOWER



INVASION

PHOTO CREDITS RACHEL GAGNON  
S. BRINKER

## KNOWN WHEREABOUTS

Kudzu primarily grows in open fields and forests, including planted forests and agricultural areas. It is well established in many American states, and is moving its way northward. With climate change affecting the seasons (milder winters, longer and hotter summers) it is expected that growing conditions in southern Canada could become optimal for Kudzu establishment. Currently, Kudzu is only known in one location in Canada, near Leamington, Ontario on the shores of Lake Erie. However, it is established in the United States in the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Washington, North Dakota, and most of the southern states. It also has limited distribution in Ohio and Michigan.

<sup>1</sup>. Discovered by Gerry Waldren in Summer 2009. Confirmed by Tony Reznick from University of Michigan, and Sam Brinker and Michael Oldham from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

INVADING SPECIES HOTLINE 1-800-563-7711

WEBSITE WWW.INVADINGSPECIES.COM • WWW.ONTARIOINVASIVEPLANTS.CA

UNWANTED CASE: KUDZU VINE

No.

## CRIMES COMMITTED

Kudzu grows at an astonishing rate, up to 30cm (1 ft) per day, and can grow up to 30m (90 ft) in a single season. It has taken over many areas of the southern United States (hence its nickname “the vine that ate the south”) and will blanket almost anything including: trees, hydro poles, fences, houses, and highway signs. It may cause power outages and hydro problems by growing over the poles and either knocking them down or causing line faults. It kills the existing tree species in the areas it invades; either by girdling them as it climbs, breaking them from the weight of the vines, or eventually by blanketing them and causing death by preventing photosynthesis. It may entirely wipe out other vegetation in the area it invades. Kudzu requires abundant sunlight but can still grow in unfavourable conditions. It grows well in disturbed areas such as fields, highway ditches, and forest edges. Unlike in the U.S., Kudzu is not a controlled or restricted species in Canada; therefore it is important to make the agricultural and horticultural communities aware that it has the potential to be a serious invader and should not be planted. Farmers should be aware that Kudzu can be mistaken for soybean when it is young, and it can be an alternate host for soybean rust.

## YOU CAN HELP!

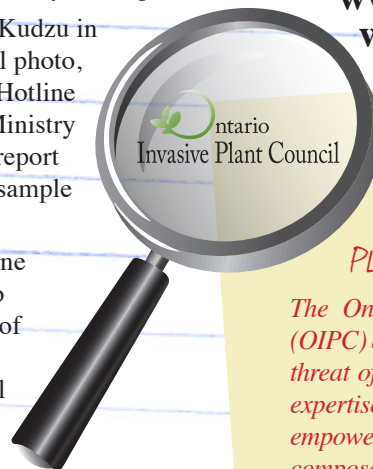
The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (O.M.N.R) have set up a toll-free number, the **Invading Species Hotline 1-800-563-7711** and website **www.invadingspecies.com** to obtain information and report sightings of Kudzu vine and other invasive species. For the Ontario Invasive Plant Council visit **www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca**. We need your help!

- **Report a sighting.** If you find Kudzu in a new area, please take a digital photo, then call the Invading Species Hotline or contact your local Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources office to report your finding and confirm your sample as Kudzu vine
- **Get involved.** Participate in one of our monitoring programs to detect and prevent the spread of invading species, or join the Ontario Invasive Plant Council to receive updates and information on invasive plant initiatives in Ontario.

**Find out more.** Contact the **Invading Species Hotline 1-800-563-7711** or visit **www.invadingspecies.com** or **www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca**

## TIPS ON PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

- ◆ Learn to properly identify and manage invasive plants on your property.
- ◆ Avoid using invasive perennials in gardens and landscaping. Always check your plant references before choosing garden plants.
- ◆ Purchase non-invasive plants from reputable suppliers. Native plants will provide a variety of benefits to the plants and wildlife that also depend on them.
- ◆ Do not dispose of compost or garden waste in natural areas as this can disturb the natural vegetation.
- ◆ When hiking, remain on designated trails and keep pets on a leash to reduce transferring invasive plants and seeds to new areas.
- ◆ When an invasive plant is flowering, cut the flower tops to prevent the plant from going to seed, put it in a garbage bag and throw it in the garbage.
- ◆ Share this fact sheet and spread the word to friends, family and neighbours.
- ◆ When in doubt about a plant, whether it is invasive or how it should be controlled, contact the “**Invading Species Hotline**” at **1-800-563-7711** or **www.invadingspecies.com** or **www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca**



### A MESSAGE FROM THE ONTARIO INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL

*The Ontario Invasive Plant Council facilitates (OIPC) a coordinated and effective response to the threat of invasive plants by providing leadership, expertise and a forum to educate, motivate and empower organizations and citizens. The OIPC is composed of conservation authorities, academic institutions, aboriginal organizations, stewardship networks, private consultants, industry and environmental NGO's as well as all levels of government. For more information on the council please visit [www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca)*