



Tried and True Native Plants To Replace Invasive Plants

Best Bets: Plants
for Particular Uses
in the Mid-Atlantic

INVASIVE PLANT: Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)



This woody perennial vine was introduced from China around 1860 and is still widely sold for landscaping. Unfortunately, this colorful non-native spreads from cultivation to old home sites, roadsides, fields, and forests, causing habitat destruction. It is invasive in natural areas of many eastern states, including Arlington and Alexandria, and national parks from Maine to North Carolina.

Problems	Oriental Bittersweet & Cross-vine
Grows aggressively, reaching lengths of 90 feet	
Covers, shades, and outcompetes other vegetation from ground to canopy level	
Strangles and kills trees by girdling	
Excessive weight causes trees to uproot	
Expands by rhizomes and root suckering	
Seeds widely dispersed by birds and mammals	
Spread by humans with improper disposal of faded wreaths and floral decorations	
Hybridizes with native bittersweet (<i>Celastrus scandens</i>), leading to loss of genetic identity	
Nurseries confuse native and exotic species	
Desired Characteristics	
Vine with colorful fruit and/or flowers	
Native Alternatives	
Bignonia capreolata (Cross-vine)	
Campsis radicans (Trumpet-creeper)	
Celastrus scandens (American Bittersweet)	
Gelsemium sempervirens (Carolina Jessamine)	
Lonicera sempervirens (Trumpet Honeysuckle)	
Parthenocissus quinquefolia (Virginia Creeper)	
Passiflora incarnata (Passionflower)	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and Glencarlyn Library Community Garden



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