

2012 Connecticut Status Report on **Mile-a-minute Vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*)**



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Cover photos (clockwise from top): Hope Leeson, Logan Senack, and Todd Mervosh

I. Overview

Mile-a-minute vine (Polygonaceae: *Persicaria perfoliata*) is a highly invasive non-native annual vine that grows quickly and spreads easily. It smothers and shades out other vegetation, causing ecological disruption and outcompeting native plants. Mile-a-minute is listed on the Connecticut Invasive Plant List and its sale is prohibited in Connecticut (Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 22a-381d), where it is known to occur in 24 towns. It has also been found in all of Connecticut's neighboring states (New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island), where control efforts are ongoing. Mile-a-minute originated in eastern Asia and became established in Pennsylvania in the middle of the 20th century (Moul 1948; Hickman 1977). It later spread throughout the mid-Atlantic region and has more recently become established in New York and New England. In Connecticut, mile-a-minute was first confirmed in Greenwich in 2000, and has since spread to other areas of the state.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the University of Connecticut (UConn) coordinate responses to reported populations of mile-a-minute vine. Reports are received from a public email reporting form and from other sources, including phone calls and reports from the UConn Cooperative Extension County offices, the UConn Home and Garden Education Center, and various state agencies, including the Department of Transportation and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

An integrated management approach is being conducted on mile-a-minute vine to reduce populations in the state. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) studies the effectiveness of various pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides in controlling mile-a-minute vine. UConn and CAES are currently investigating the effectiveness of a biological control agent (*Rhinoncomimus latipes*, a stem-boring weevil) through a cooperative agreement, which is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) works to control mile-a-minute vine invasions along some Connecticut roadways. Many Connecticut towns respond to homeowner reports of mile-a-minute vine populations, and various non-governmental organizations and not-for-profit groups, including Mad Gardener's, Inc. and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) devote resources to controlling mile-a-minute vine on properties across the state. Gardening groups, nature centers, municipalities, and volunteers also contribute time and resources toward tracking and controlling mile-a-minute vine.

2. Species taxonomy and identification information

The full name of the species is *Persicaria perfoliata* (L.) H. Gross, formerly *Polygonum perfoliatum* L.

Family: Polygonaceae

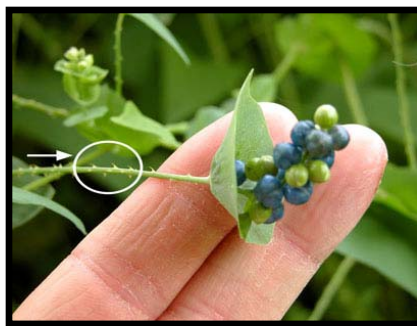
Subfamily: Polygonoideae

Common names: The species has several common names, including mile-a-minute vine, mile-a-minute weed, devil-tail tearthumb, devil's tearthumb, Asiatic tearthumb, and giant climbing tearthumb.

Identification: mile-a-minute vine is a herbaceous annual vine with entire, triangular, peltate leaves, retrorse (backwards-pointing) prickles along the stems and leaf veins, and saucer-shaped modified leaves (ocrea) that encircle the stem at the nodes. The fruits are 3-5 mm, with an iridescent blue perianth covering a single, smooth, shiny, black or reddish-black achene (Gleason and Cronquist 1991; FNA 2005). Vines can reach 20 to 25 feet long in a single growing season and may produce hundreds of fruits, especially in sunny areas. The species prefers sunny locations but does occur in shade.



1. Triangular leaves
(Photo: Todd Mervosh)



2. Barbs
(Photo: Todd Mervosh)



3. Ocrea
(Photo: Les Mehrhoff)

3. Legal status

In Connecticut, mile-a-minute vine is prohibited and listed as an invasive plant under Connecticut General Statute Sec. 22a-381d. The purchase, sale, distribution, cultivation, and transportation of the plants is prohibited, except for research, education, or eradication purposes. The species is listed as Potentially Invasive by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group, although this designation may be changed to Invasive now that the presence of mile-a-minute has been confirmed in that state (Echandi pers. comm. 2009). Mile-a-minute is recognized as a major problem in the mid-Atlantic region, especially in Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania, where research into the effectiveness of the biological control agent is ongoing (Hough-Goldstein 2008). The species is also listed as a Watch List species by the North Carolina Native Plant Society (NCNPS 2008) and is known to be a problematic invader in other states and the District of Columbia.

4. Species origin and spread in the US

There have been at least two introductions of mile-a-minute vine into the United States, but at least one did not persist or establish. Mile-a-minute was collected near Portland, Oregon in the 1890s, but has not been recollected on the West Coast since (Hickman 1977).

The mile-a-minute now found in Connecticut, throughout New England, and the mid-Atlantic region may have dispersed from an introduction in Pennsylvania, where the plants are thought to

have arrived at a nursery via contaminated soil or nursery stock shipped from eastern Asia. Mile-a-minute was first collected in Pennsylvania in 1946 (Hill 1987), but may have been present as early as the 1930s (Hickman 1977).

5. Spread in Connecticut and current known Connecticut distribution

The species was first reported in Connecticut by Les Mehrhoff (UConn) and Bill Williams (Audubon Greenwich) in Greenwich in 2000, at a location very near the border with Westchester County, NY, where mile-a-minute had been known to occur since at least 1994. The find was officially reported in the Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society (Lamont and Fitzgerald 2001). At the time of its discovery and confirmation, the population was already somewhat large (Mehrhoff pers. comm. 2009), and attempts to eradicate it failed.

By December 2011, mile-a-minute vine was known to occur in five counties in Connecticut (Fairfield, Hartford, Litchfield, New Haven, and New London), in a total of 24 towns. Seventeen of the 24 towns are in Fairfield County or in Litchfield County along the Fairfield County/Litchfield County border, and most populations in other areas of the state are not as large or well-established as those in Fairfield County, Sprague, or North Haven.

6. County summaries

Voucher specimens from some of the locations listed below are deposited at the UConn Herbarium (CONN), and all populations have been confirmed by UConn, DEEP, CAES or other state or town staff via voucher specimens, photographs, or direct observations. With the exception of the mile-a-minute populations in the New Milford area, which generally have been tracked and recorded in detail for 3 to 4 years by Mad Gardener's Inc., additional survey of the areas around all known populations is needed to determine if other currently unknown satellite populations of mile-a-minute are present nearby. Satellite populations are extremely likely, as mile-a-minute has been present in some areas for a number of years without any control taking place. Additionally, all areas of the state should be monitored to the extent possible.

In addition to conducting more detailed surveys of areas surrounding known mile-a-minute occurrences, determination of vectors by which mile-a-minute spreads (and subsequent reduction in spread by controlling those vectors when at all possible) should be an important priority in further developing an effective control strategy for this species. See Section 9 for additional discussion about vectors.

Fairfield County

Mile-a-minute vine is well established in Fairfield County, where the species has been known to occur for approximately 12 years and where at least 12 towns in the county have confirmed populations. Many of those populations are large (over ¼ acre), extremely dense in some locations, and spread over multiple properties.

Control actions in Fairfield County should focus both on reducing spread to other areas and on reducing the amount of mile-a-minute vine present on private, public, and commercial properties. UConn and CAES scientists are working cooperatively to release biological control agents (*Rhinoncomimus latipes*, a stem-boring weevil) in some Fairfield County locations, including Fairfield (2010), Greenwich (2009, 2011), Newtown (2009, 2011), Norwalk (2011),

Stamford (2010, 2011), and Westport (2010). These beneficial insect releases may be appropriate for other populations in Fairfield County that are too large to be pulled by hand or where other control methods are otherwise not viable. Small populations and populations on individual properties may be controlled by hand-pulling or mowing (see Section 10, “Control actions” below).

In Fairfield County, mile-a-minute vine has been found in the following towns: Danbury, Fairfield, Greenwich, Newtown, Norwalk, Monroe, Redding, Ridgefield, Stamford, Westport, Weston, and Wilton.



Extremely high fruit production at a large mile-a-minute infestation in Fairfield. Photo by Logan Senack, September 2009.

Hartford County

Prior to 2011, only one mile-a-minute plant had been found in Hartford County, growing in a mulched landscape bed in Simsbury. The plant was removed prior to seed formation and no further plants have been reported to date at that location. An additional population of mile-a-minute vine was found in Bristol during the summer of 2011. The population was found in a residential area along 6 feet of fence line. Control efforts in Hartford County should focus on early detection and monitoring for new populations. It is likely that there are other populations of mile-a-minute in the county, particularly in the Bristol area, and survey of adjacent areas is recommended.

In Hartford County, mile-a-minute vine has been found in the following towns: Bristol and Simsbury.

Litchfield County

Litchfield County is known to have very large populations of mile-a-minute vine in New Milford, Bridgewater, and Roxbury. Additional plants were discovered in Woodbury in 2011. One plant was reported in Torrington in 2007, but was removed before it produced fruits. Although mile-a-minute is not known to occur in other Litchfield County towns, populations exist in New York state close to the western borders of Salisbury, Sharon, and Kent.

In the New Milford/Bridgewater/Roxbury area, control actions should focus both on reducing spread to other areas and on reducing the amount of mile-a-minute vine present on private, public, and commercial properties. Releases of biological control agents have occurred in Bridgewater (2009, 2011) and New Milford (2009) and may be appropriate for other populations in the county that are too large to be pulled by hand or where other control methods are otherwise not viable. Small populations and populations on individual properties may be controlled by hand-pulling or mowing. Community groups have been especially active in removing mile-a-minute from properties in the area. New Milford and Bridgewater also received an Invasive Plant Control Grant from DEP in 2010 to fund hand-pulling efforts. Control efforts in other parts of the county should focus on early detection and immediate removal of any small populations found.

In Litchfield County, mile-a-minute vine has been found in the following towns:
Bridgewater, New Milford, Roxbury, Torrington, and Woodbury.

New Haven County

Mile-a-minute vine occurs in two areas of New Haven County. Large populations of mile-a-minute exist along the North Haven/Wallingford line, where this invasive species was first reported in August 2008. Since then, a number of organizations and state agencies have assisted in surveying the area and controlling the mile-a-minute found there. The CT Department of Transportation (DOT) controls satellite populations of MAM when plants appear near state roads. UConn and CAES scientists worked cooperatively to release biological control agents (*Rhinoncomimus latipes*, a stem-boring weevil) at this location (2009). The population is being monitored for at least three years to determine weevil efficacy and establishment.

As of 2011, mile-a-minute has also been found in Southbury, growing in a river floodplain. Other populations of mile-a-minute are likely in the area but have not been confirmed to date.

In New Haven County, mile-a-minute vine has been found in the following towns:
North Haven and Southbury.

New London County

Only 3 towns in New London County are known to have mile-a-minute vine. Two of the towns have small populations, which have been controlled for multiple years. The populations in Sprague are well established but are being controlled by a combination of hand-pulling and biological control releases (2011), although additional populations in the area are likely. Survey

efforts should focus on early detection and locating new populations. Management activities should occur wherever MAM populations are found.

In New London County, mile-a-minute vine has been found in the following towns: Lyme, Sprague, and Stonington.

7. The importance of early detection and rapid response

Mile-a-minute vine is well established in many parts of southeastern Connecticut, particularly in Fairfield County. Control efforts in Fairfield County should focus on limiting spread to new areas. Additional releases of the biological control agent (*Rhyncomimus latipes*) should be considered for suitable locations.

With the exception of the well-documented invaded areas in New Milford and Bridgewater and the area in North Haven, the rest of Connecticut is not known to have populations of mile-a-minute of the size or density of those found in Fairfield County. Emphasis in the rest of the counties in Connecticut should focus on the early detection of new populations of mile-a-minute and the fast and effective removal of those few populations already known to exist. Delimiting surveys in all areas near a mile-a-minute occurrence are recommended. Outreach to town staff, including conservation commissions and public works departments, and to private businesses such as garden centers, nurseries, and landscapers is crucial to raise awareness about mile-a-minute vine and to assist DEEP in locating populations of mile-a-minute vine early in their establishment.

8. New populations

New populations of plants suspected to be mile-a-minute vine should be reported promptly to the state. The University of Connecticut hosts and maintains an online form at www.hort.uconn.edu/mam that can be used to send a report to staff in the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture. A person who suspects they have found mile-a-minute can also contact Donna Ellis (UConn) via phone at 860-486-6448, or Logan Senack by email at logan.senack@uconn.edu.

While approximately 85% of suspected reports of mile-a-minute are later determined to be other more common species, it is important that plants meeting the following description are reported: triangular leaves, small, curved barbs along the stems and on the underside of leaves along veins, and saucer-shaped modified leaves at branching points.

9. Vectors

Mile-a-minute spreads by a combination of natural factors and human activity. A list of potential vectors is provided below.

Natural vectors:

Birds and other animals, water dispersal (seeds float), flooding/extreme weather events

Possible Response: Early detection of new arrivals and subsequent rapid removal of populations before establishment

Human vectors (not ranked or listed by priority):

Hikers (Seeds may spread via boot treads and clothes)

Possible Response: Education and outreach to relevant groups: possibly land trusts, CT Audubon, nature centers, etc. Boot-brush stations and signage in high-risk/sensitive (or highly invaded) natural areas. Public Service Announcement campaign.

Roadways and other traffic corridors, cars

Possible Response: Coordinate with CT DOT for early detection of new arrivals and control along state roads.

Spread on mowers, landscaping equipment, utility maintenance vehicles

Possible Response: Education and outreach to relevant groups: landscapers, private lawn care companies, water suppliers, etc. and others. Provide guidelines on equipment cleaning.

Improper removal efforts

Ineffective removal may result in seed dispersal and increased spread of mile-a-minute.

Possible Response: Publish guidelines on minimizing soil disturbance and properly removing invasive plants from the landscape.

Improper disposal of invasive material

Possible Response: Education and outreach groups doing control work, including mile-a-minute control. Publish guidelines on proper disposal of invasive plants.

Unwanted hitchhiker seeds or plants in containerized plants, contaminated nursery stock, and/or contaminated crop seeds, and **movement of contaminated mulch and fill**

Possible Response: Develop best practices guidelines for use of mulch and fill that may be contaminated.

10. Control actions

Control actions for new populations will depend on population size, location, and other factors. DEEP and UConn strongly encourage that anyone in Connecticut attempting control of mile-a-minute vines on their property contact the state first (see attachment 4). Control of mile-a-minute requires persistence over several years. Seeds may remain viable in the soil for up to seven years. The discovery of mile-a-minute vine at any new location should be considered an early detection event and should be reported to DEEP and UConn immediately.

Mechanical control:

Hand Pulling

Removing plants by hand over a number of years may be an effective way to reduce or eliminate mile-a-minute populations, especially for small infestations. Mile-a-minute is an annual and does not spread vegetatively. Plants have shallow, fibrous roots and can be carefully pulled out of the soil in their entirety. Removing plants does not eliminate the seed bank remaining in the soil, but will reduce or eliminate the addition of new seeds to the seed bank from newly grown and fruiting plants from the current year. Plants with seeds, fruits or flowers should not be composted, as the seeds may remain viable and spread to new locations in the composted material. Plants pulled before they flower can be composted.

Note: Plants are covered in small barbs that can easily puncture skin and thin gloves. Removing plants by hand when seeds are already present on the plants is less effective, as the species is an annual and new vines will grow in subsequent years as seeds overwinter in the soil. Seeds in the immature (green) fruits can still germinate, although at a somewhat reduced rate compared to mature (blue) fruits (Hough-Goldstein 2008). Fruits have a tendency to drop from the plants if disturbed, especially when ripe. Care should be taken to avoid transporting seeds to new locations via boot treads or improperly closed refuse bags.

Mowing

Mowing may be an effective way to control mile-a-minute vine, especially for populations in large, flat areas. Mowing should take place as early in the year as possible to reduce the likelihood of accidentally spreading or distributing mile-a-minute seeds on mowing equipment and may need to be repeated. Additionally, mown areas may also need to be hand-pulled at the edges or in areas where mowers cannot reach (near tree trunks, etc.) for effective control.

Note: Mowers and any other equipment used should be cleaned thoroughly and examined for any seeds or fruits after mowing an area with mile-a-minute to ensure that seeds are not inadvertently spread to new locations, *especially* if mowing occurs when plants have already begun to flower and fruit. Inspecting and cleaning all equipment is recommended after *every* use to avoid spreading mile-a-minute or any other invasive species to new locations.

Chemical Control

Chemical control may be an option at some locations. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) has conducted experiments regarding the effectiveness of various pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides for the control of mile-a-minute vine in Connecticut. Todd Mervosh, Weed Scientist at CAES, reports that trifluralin (ex. Preen granules) and pendimethalin (Pendulum spray or granules) may be effective pre-emergent herbicides if applied early in the growing season. Additionally, foliar herbicides, including imazapic (Plateau), oxyfluorfen (Goal 2XL), glyphosate (Roundup) and triclopyr (Brush-B-Gon/Garlon 3A) sprays may also be effective against mile-a-minute, although seeds that are already mature may still remain viable after herbicide application (Mervosh, pers. comm. 2009).

NOTE: Some pesticides may not be used in wetland areas. A pesticide applicator license may be required for the use of some herbicides, even on private property. Always follow all label directions. Listing of a particular product or chemical is provided for information only and does not constitute endorsement by DEEP, the University of Connecticut or any other party. Contact UConn or CAES for more information on chemical control options.

Biological Control Agent—stem-boring weevils

A biological control agent, the weevil *Rhinoncomimus latipes*, has been released with success in Delaware, New Jersey, and other mid-Atlantic states. Adult weevils feed on mile-a-minute vine leaves, reducing the leaf area available for photosynthesis. Weevil larvae burrow into the stems

of the plant, causing internal damage and stem collapse. By introducing a highly specific beneficial insect of mile-a-minute from the plants' native habitat, populations of mile-a-minute may be controlled over time, and the overall biomass and ecological impact of mile-a-minute in an ecosystem can be significantly reduced. However, the release of weevils as a biological control for mile-a-minute will not result in complete eradication of mile-a-minute vine. Biological control is therefore not appropriate for all mile-a-minute populations, especially populations that are smaller, outlying populations or early detection events.

Scientists at UConn and CAES are cooperating on a biological control project, funded in part by USDA, in some areas of Connecticut where mile-a-minute vines have been confirmed. Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island began introductions of the beneficial weevils for biological control at selected locations in 2009. Releases continued in 2010 and 2011. Massachusetts conducted weevil releases in 2010. Monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the weevils as a control will continue for at least three years.

11. Public resources

Information regarding mile-a-minute identification, reporting, resources, and spread throughout Connecticut and neighboring states can be found online at www.hort.uconn.edu/mam. This website was developed under a cooperative agreement between DEEP and UConn to improve outreach and provides a source of information about mile-a-minute vine to the public. The website also hosts an online reporting form. The reporting form can be used to send an initial report of a suspected mile-a-minute occurrence to staff at UConn, allowing UConn to work with the initial reporter to confirm the presence or absence of mile-a-minute plants in locations throughout the state.

12. Acknowledgements

The format and section titles of this document are based in part on the Connecticut Response Plan for Hydrilla developed by Nancy Murray at DEEP. Special thanks to Betsy Corrigan, Donna Ellis, Les Mehrhoff, Nancy Murray, Kathleen Nelson, Bruce Villwock, and many others for participating and cooperating in this control effort.

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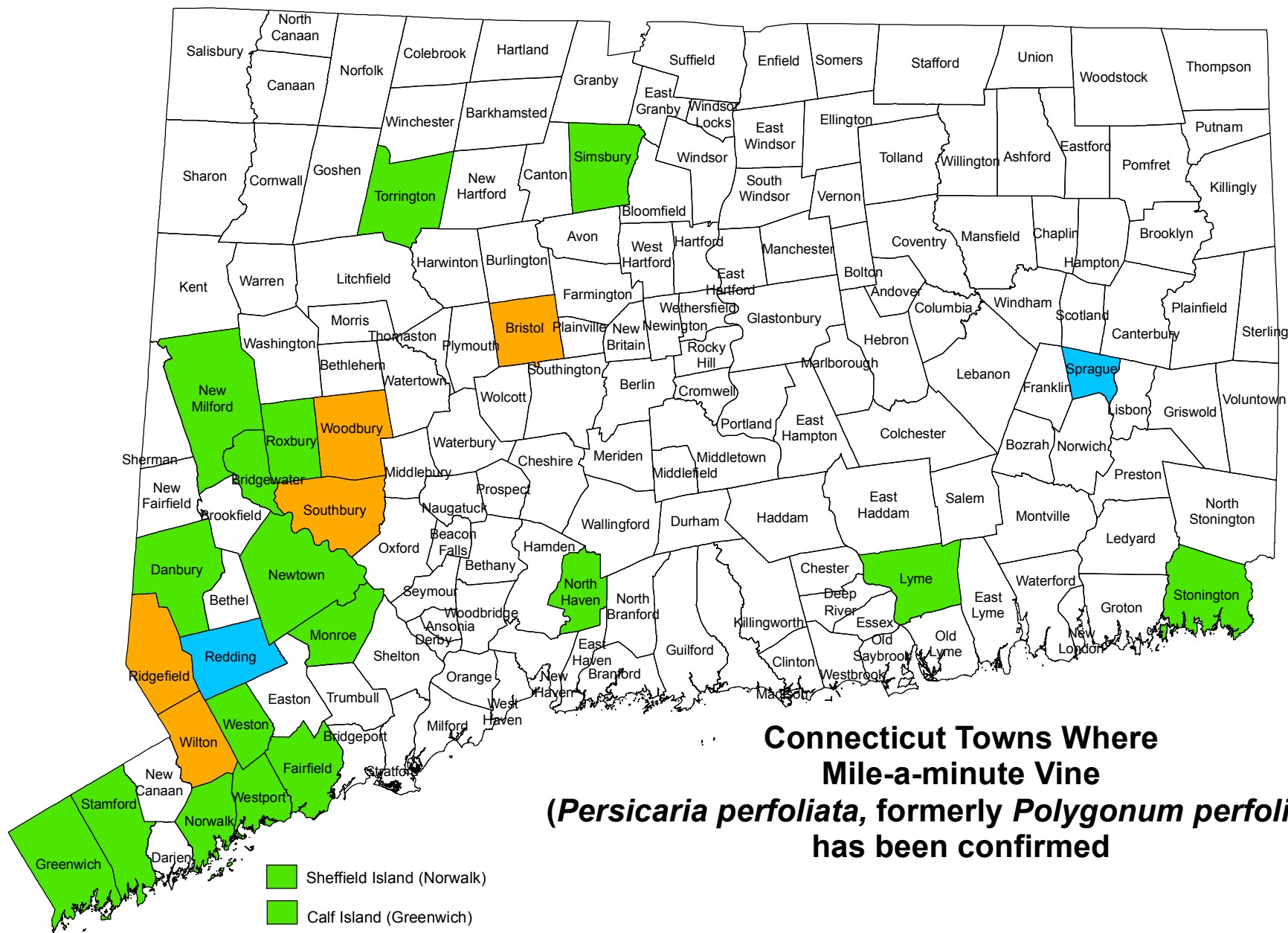
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**Connecticut Towns Where
Mile-a-minute Vine
(*Persicaria perfoliata*, formerly *Polygonum perfoliatum*)
has been confirmed**

 = NEW IN 2011

 = NEW IN 2010

*Sample of online reporting form: for online version please visit
<http://www.reportmam.uconn.edu/ReportMAM.html>*

Early Detection Observation Reporting Form

Please use this form only to report new observations of state-listed, high-priority invasive plant species.

Observer Contact Information:

Name (First and Last):

Email Address:

Telephone (*required if no email address provided*):

Date Observed (mm/dd/yyyy):

Location of observation:

Town:

Nearest Road Intersection (street names or highway numbers):

County: (if known)

Land Ownership:

Species Observed:

Does the plant have:

☐ Leaves shaped like triangles (no indentations or lobes)?
(Not sure about the leaf shape? [Click here](#) for more information and pictures)

☐ Curved prickles or barbs?
(Not sure? [Click here](#) for more information and pictures)

☐ Ocrea (saucer shaped leaf around the stem at nodes)?
(Not sure what an ocrea looks like? [Click here](#) for more information and pictures)

Plant species observed: Mile-a-minute Vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*)

Additional Information

Is the population near a road, hiking trail, picnic area or other frequently used area?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Habitat Type: (To choose more than one category, hold down the CTRL key while selecting).

- Wetland/Marsh
- Dry Soil
- Forest
- Grass
- Garden/Yard
- State or town park
- Roadside or trailside
- Other

Population description and comments:

Please provide a brief description of the environment in which the plant(s) is (are) growing and a rough estimate of their population density and size. This space can also be used for additional comments.

Upload Photos

☐ Yes, I have photos.

☐ No, I do not have photos.

Trouble submitting this form online? Please email mileaminate@uconn.edu for assistance.



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

For Information Contact:

Dennis Schain, (860) 424-4100
Nancy Murray, (860) 424-3589
September 30, 2011

P R E S S R E L E A S E

STATE ASKS PUBLIC TO REPORT SIGHTINGS OF INVASIVE MILE-A-MINUTE VINE AS CONTROL EFFORTS CONTINUE

Scientists and staff at the University of Connecticut (UConn) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) are continuing their collaborative efforts to control mile-a-minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*) and remind the public to remain on the lookout for this plant. Mile-a-minute vine is a highly invasive annual plant from eastern Asia that can quickly outcompete and replace native vegetation, damaging habitat for native plants and animals.

“Invasive plants are a significant threat to Connecticut’s natural resources, and mile-a-minute is potentially one of the worst. Early detection and rapid response are essential if we are to keep these invaders at bay,” said Bill Hyatt, chief of DEEP’s Bureau of Natural Resources.

Earlier this month, UConn and DEEP biologists confirmed the presence of mile-a-minute vine at a location in Bristol, a city where these plants had not previously been reported.

“The public is our best source of reports about this invasive plant, and as we approach the end of the growing season, these plants become especially visible in parks, forests and yards. The early fall is the ideal time to find and report these problem plants,” said Logan Senack, Connecticut Invasive Plant Coordinator.

“If you find mile-a-minute, especially if it is growing on your own property, make sure to report it before pulling it up”, adds Donna Ellis, Senior Extension Educator at UConn. “We may need to collect additional information about the plants before they are removed.”

Mile-a-minute was first found in Connecticut in Fairfield County in 1997. Since then, it has spread to 20 Connecticut towns, as far east as Stonington and as far north as Simsbury. Mile-a-minute spreads by seed and quickly grows into dense stands that can cover and outcompete native vegetation.

During this past summer, UConn and DEEP scientists coordinated removal efforts in the town of Sprague, hosting several invasive plant control activities for mile-a-minute along the Shetucket River. In addition, scientists from UConn and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station are attempting to reduce the abundance of mile-a-minute at a number of sites by releasing insects that feed exclusively on the plant.

Visit www.hort.uconn.edu/mam for additional identification tips, photographs and control information. You can also contact Logan Senack (logan.senack@uconn.edu) or Donna Ellis (860-486-6448; donna.ellis@uconn.edu) for additional information. To report a suspected mile-a-minute invasion, visit the above website or contact Donna Ellis at UConn at 860-486-6448.

Identifying mile-a-minute

Mile-a-minute vine has three identifying traits that help distinguish it from other similar species found in the state. All three traits must occur on the same plant. The traits are: (1) triangular leaves with three sides and no lobes; (2) small but sharp barbs that curve down along the stem; and (3) small saucer-shaped leaves found at branching points along the stem.



A mile-a-minute vine growing in Bridgewater, photo provided by Donna Ellis.

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Contact Information

For more information about mile-a-minute vine in Connecticut, please contact:

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