

Cape Ivy

(Delaireia odorata)

Identification: This rampantly growing perennial vine has smooth-surfaced, bright green leaves which have 5 to 6 points along their edges. It can climb to about 30 feet into trees and forms a solid cover that blocks light and smothers other vegetation. Due to its shallow root system, cape ivy



can contribute to serious soil erosion problems on hillsides. It is sometimes confused with the native wild cucumber, but there are several key differences: wild cucumber has white flowers which emerge in the spring, has hairs on its leaves, and has twining tendrils like a pea; cape ivy has yellow flowers which emerge in the winter, has hairless leaves, and lacks tendrils.

Removal: Cape ivy is difficult to eliminate for two reasons: stolons and underground parts readily fragment while being removed, and plants will grow from almost any remaining fragment. Manual removal requires clearing away native and invasive plant material to gain visual and physical access to locations with cape ivy stems emerging from the ground. Roots and stems must be teased out of the ground using a pointed or three-pronged mini-rake to loosen the soil. Removed cape ivy should be placed in or on plastic and, if feasible, removed from the area. Putting soda lime into cape ivy container bags will hasten the otherwise slow breakdown of this plant material. Manual control is sometimes followed with spot chemical treatment of resprouts. Cape ivy material should not be put through a chipper or sent unbagged to a dump site. Both would likely result in spread of cape ivy.

Follow-up: Returning at four to eight week intervals is necessary to locate and remove overlooked and resprouting plants. Complete control may take many years, as this species may persist inconspicuously for a year or more on previously worked sites and then suddenly explode with new growth.