

## Fast-growing invasive vine threatens Shelton

Written by Fred Musante  
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Conservation officials issued a warning this spring for Connecticut residents to be on the lookout for a fast-growing, Asian vine that can destroy trees and shrubbery and endanger the state's forests.

Shelton Conservation Agent Teresa Gallagher said the aptly named mile-a-minute vine is an annual weed, *Persicaria perfoliata*, that can grow up to six inches per day. It has been spotted around Connecticut and in nearby towns, and she wants to keep it out of Shelton.

Like something monstrous from a science fiction movie, the vine engulfs other plants growing in its path, including herbaceous plants, shrubs, trees and fields, and chokes them to death. It is frequently found near stream banks and forest edges, and can cause ecological and economical harm.

The mile-a-minute vine has been nicknamed the "Kudzo of the North." Kudzo is another Asian plant that was introduced in the South to reduce soil erosion, but it grew out of control and has proven impossible to eradicate.

The mile-a-minute vine shares similar destructive qualities. First reported in 2006 in western Fairfield County, the vine has since been officially sighted as near as Fairfield and Monroe.

The Connecticut Legislature has made it illegal to cultivate, sell or transport the species, but natural areas continue to become infected. The vine's seeds sprout in spring, and cover ground as the season continues.

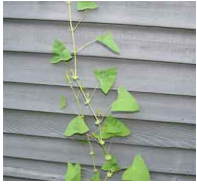
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Now at Shelton's doorstep, the vine's destructive qualities have officials asking people to help locate and wipe out the species.

In May, Gallagher began distributing pamphlets prepared by the state to anyone in Shelton who would listen in an attempt to fight the vine's spread here.



The vine's three identifying traits are equilateral triangular shaped leaves, small barbs on the stems and saucer-shaped leaves surrounding the stem nodes. Other vines have triangular shaped leaves or barbed stems, but only the mile-a-minute vine has both. It also sprouts green to metallic blue berries.

If a vine with these characteristics is sighted, the Shelton Conservation Commission asks to have it reported immediately. It is relatively easy to combat when it's young by pulling it up by the roots, but fighting it once it has spread can be a big chore.

"Be aware, be on the lookout. If it gets established we won't have the manpower to deal with it," Gallagher said. "A little bit of work and knowledge up front can save you a huge amount of work and money later on."

Gallagher also encourages people to check compost piles for any signs of seeding.

If you see the mile-a-minute vine, note its location and contact the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group at 860-486-6448 (Donna Ellis) or visit [hort.uconn.edu/mam](http://hort.uconn.edu/mam) (click "Report MAM").