

INVASIVE HARDY KIWI

BOWERBERRY, TARA VINE, CHINESE GOOSEBERRY

Actinidia arguta



Actinidia arguta is a twining, woody vine with alternate simple leaves. The leaves have small teeth and red petioles (stalks that join leaf to the stem). *A. arguta* produces small white flowers (about 1 inch in diameter) that bloom in June or July.

Later in the season, hardy kiwi produces smooth-skinned fruits that are about 1 inch long. The skin can be either green or brown and the fruits look like miniature versions of their commercial cousins.



Young *A. arguta* vines are smooth with light brown-red to grey-white bark. Young vines are often confused with asiatic bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), another invasive. The young vines also have a distinctive chambered pith, the soft spongy tissue at the center of the vine. As the *A. arguta* vine matures and the bark begins to peel off in rectangular sections and the color tends more toward brown-grey. Mature vines are often confused with native wild grape vines.



ORIGIN

Actinidia arguta, commonly known as hardy kiwi, invasive hardy kiwi, tara vine, and others names, came to North American from eastern Asia in 1877. It was a popular ornamental vine planted around Gilded Age 'cottages' in Western Massachusetts, as well as related properties along the Connecticut River and also in Maine.

Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)

thebeatnews.org | 29 Highland Ave. Pittsfield, MA 01201



This publication is supported, in part, with funding from the Northeastern IPM Center (NortheastIPM.org) and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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A. arguta mature vine A. arguta mat and vines in spring A. arguta mat and vines in winter

HOW IT GROWS

Hardy kiwi seeds are probably spread by racoons and other small mammals, as well as birds like wild turkey and ruffed grouse. Invasive hardy kiwi vine can grow over 20 feet per year. The vines suck up huge amounts of moisture during rainy periods in the summer and can hold large amounts of snow and ice in the winter. Both can cause the trees supporting the vines to bend and break. *Actinidai arguta*, hardy kiwi, can germinate under a closed canopy and grow as a ground cover. As the vine matures the mat can reach six feet high and completely out-compete other species. The mature vines climb surrounding vegetation, eventually pulling down trees and creating 'curtains' that hang from the canopy.

THE PROBLEM

Invasive hardy kiwi is threatening the diversity and stability of native New England ecosystems. Curtains of vines form 'amphitheaters' of kiwi that strangle native herbaceous plants, shrubs, and mature trees, creating acres of unsustainable, unhealthy monoculture.

In recent years *A. arguta* fruit has been promoted as an alternative crop. It is often hailed as a climate change resistant vine by a variety of voices, from permaculturists to larger agricultural ventures. Hardy kiwi vine has huge potential, however, to become established and disrupt native ecosystems. The more hardy kiwi is cultivated, the higher the potential for it to escape and invade surrounding forestlands.

OFTEN CONFUSED WITH



Asiatic Bittersweet | *Celastrus orbiculatus*



Wild Grape | *Vitis species*



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