

June

Invasive of the Month



Kudzu (*Pueraria montana* var. *lobata*)

One of the most notorious invasive species, known as the "vine that ate the south", Kudzu poses a major ecological threat here in Raleigh. Native to Japan and Southeast China, it was first brought to America in 1897 where it was introduced at the Centennial exposition in Philadelphia, praised for its ornamental characteristics and proposed as forage crop for livestock. During the 1930s through 50s it was promoted by the government as soil stabilizer. However, due to its quick growth and ability to shade out native vegetation it was designated as a noxious weed in 1997. It is estimated that kudzu now covers over 150,000 acres in North Carolina.

How to Identify:

Kudzu is a member of the pea family, they form seed pods that are brown, flat, and hairy. It has large, slightly ovate, trifoliate leaves with small hairs on the underside, the vines are also slightly hairy. Flowers bloom in late summer, they are about 0.5 inches in length and a purple to pink color. Unlike other invasive vines such as wisteria or english ivy the average stem diameter is relatively small ~ 0.5-4 inches.

Fun fact:

Kudzu can grow at a rate of a foot per day!

Invasive Species Program

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