New Invaders Watch Program
Early Detection and Rapid Response Network

COMMON NAME: **CHINESE YAM**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Dioscorea polystachya*
Synonym: *Dioscorea oppositifolia*

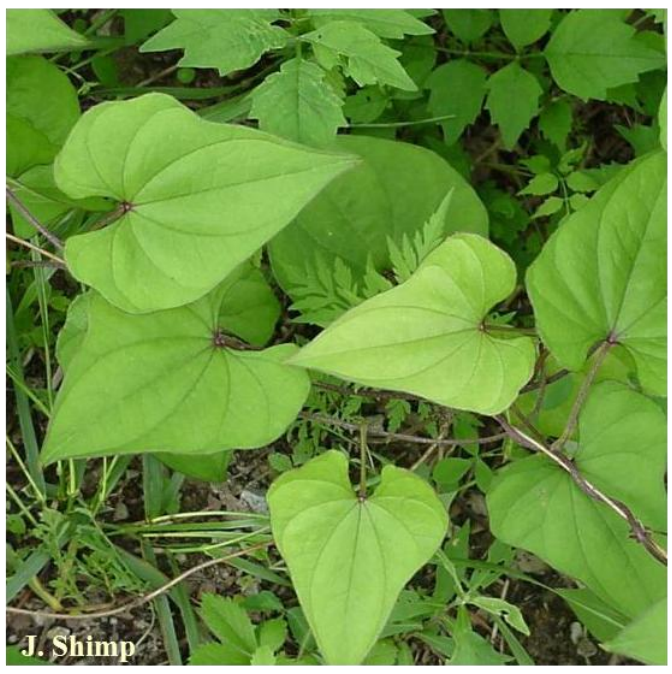
FAMILY: *Dioscoreaceae*

ORIGIN: China

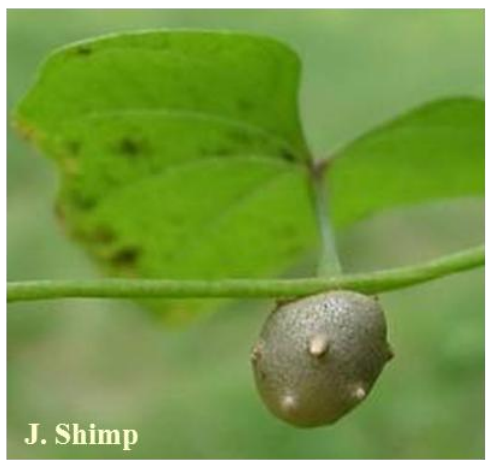
US INTRODUCTION: Introduced in 1800's as an ornamental garden plant and for edible and medicinal purposes

MAJOR PATHWAYS OF SPREAD:

- Water
- Ornamental garden planting



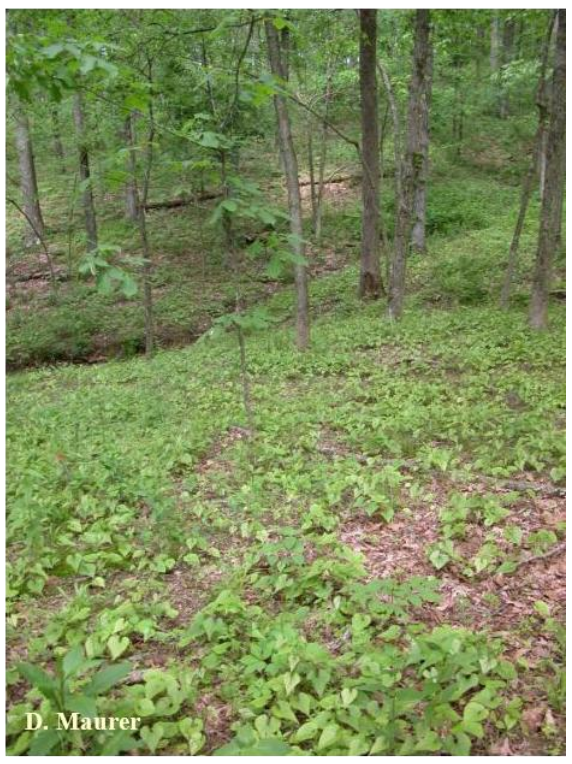
Leaves along mature vine



Bulbil

Bubil with dime for size reference

Newly emerged plant w/ first year leaf



Yam invasion, southern Illinois

IDENTIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS:

- Perennial, high climbing, herbaceous, vine; blooms in summer , spreads vegetatively via bulbils (small potato-like tubers)
- Stem grows from large root-like tubers and twines clockwise
- Leaves deeply lobed (hastate-sagittate) and concave at the base, arrangement on stem variable; new leaves ofeeten bronze colored, mature leaves with reddish-purple leaf margins
- Flowers small and white (green to yellow) with a cinnamon fragrance
- Bulbils produced in the leaf axils
- Threatens floodplain and upland forests, riparian corridors, savannas, drainage ways; grow in full sun to full shade

NATIVE LOOK-ALIKES:

Wild Yam, (*D. villosa*), leaves are hearted shaped and alternate, twines counter clockwise, and does not produce bulbils.
Smilax sp., green briars, often woody with tendrils and flowers clustered into a flat-topped, umbrella shaped inflorescence, many sp. have spines.

Non-Native vs. Native

Dioscorea polystachya purple leaf base, shield –shaped leaf

Dioscorea villosa, green leaf base, heart-shaped leaf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

USDA Plants Database.
http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=diop

Bugwood.
http://wiki.bugwood.org/Dioscorea_oppositifolia