

**SEPTEMBER INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH:
Japanese stiltgrass, *Microstegium vimineum***

Japanese stiltgrass, also known as Nepalese browntop and Asian stiltgrass, is an annual grass relatively new to Ohio. It was likely first documented in Ohio in 1958 by Floyd Bartley who collected it near Sandy Springs in Adams County. However, it was not common in southern Ohio until the 1990s and was considered a “Watch List” species on the first ODNR invasive plant list in 2001. It is native to China, India, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. This grass was first reported in North America around 1919 in Tennessee, likely introduced from its use as packing material for porcelain from China.

Japanese stiltgrass replaces native vegetation in a wide range of plant communities, including forested floodplains, forest edges, stream banks, fields, trails, and ditches. It grows well in many light conditions, prefers damp conditions, and often can be found in disturbed areas. As an annual, its seeds can be easily spread from site to site on vehicles, equipment, and footwear. In Ohio, we often see it colonizing logging roads, gas well roads, stream edges, ditches, and trail edges.

Japanese stiltgrass can be hard to identify as it is similar to several other grass species, such as Virginia cutgrass or white grass (*Leersia virginica*) and other fine grasses. It resembles a small, delicate bamboo plant, with a sprawling habit. It can grow up to 3.5 feet tall, although it is typically 1-2 feet tall. The leaves are 1-3 inches long, asymmetrical with an off-center midrib, and are alternately arranged on the stalk. Each lance-shaped leaf has a noticeable stripe of silvery hairs down the length of the upper leaf surface. This hairy midrib on each leaf is very characteristic and distinctive. In late summer and early fall, one or two delicate flower spikes form at the top of each stem.

Control of this aggressive grass can be very difficult once it is established. It is best to control populations early when they are just getting established or else management will be very time-consuming. Since they bloom late in the year, often in late August through September in Ohio, control should be done before flowering and fruiting occur. Options include mowing, hand-pulling, or weed-whacking after July to minimize additional seed germination or re-sprouting. Herbicide application may be done in the same timeframe using glyphosate or a grass-specific herbicide such as Fusilade, depending on what other species may be growing with the stiltgrass. Multiple applications will likely be necessary as plants continue to germinate until late summer.

Japanese stiltgrass was assessed by OIPC in May 2014 and received a score of 60 (out of 80 potential points), so it is in our invasive category, well above 45 points. It has been spreading rapidly throughout the state in the last 10 years and has been documented in at least two-thirds of the state. It is very difficult to control once established. If you have any specific questions about this plant, just contact us or search through references available online. Most land-managing agencies and organizations in Ohio now have strategies in place to minimize its spread and keep it from invading high-quality natural areas.

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