

# Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*)

## DESCRIPTION:

Enchanter's nightshade is a native perennial herbaceous plant often found in woodlands and semi-shaded habitats. Clingy seeds are quickly distributed by mammal fur, bird feathers, and clothing of humans, making it a minor pest. It can also spread by root runners to form small colonies. It is especially abundant in disturbed woodlands and can carpet the forest floor without adequate competition from other species. With that said, nectar and pollen attract native pollinators such as carpenter bees and it is often one of few remaining flowering plants in a degraded woodland.

As such, though controlling this species may be necessary at times to reduce the annoyance from the sticky seeds and to help re-balance a woodland ecosystem, the goal should not be to eliminate this species from a site, but simply to keep its population in check.

## IDENTIFICATION:

Oppositely-arranged leaves are ovate to oblong in shape with a pointed tip and lightly-toothed margins. Leaves become significantly smaller toward the top of the stem. Stem becomes fairly hairless before flower clusters. Small, white flowers are sparsely distributed on a slender stalks up to 8" long. Blooming period lasts for about a month during the summer and produces teardrop-shaped fruits, densely covered with stiff, hooked hairs.

## CONTROL METHODS:

**Organic:** This plant is fairly easy to pull out in loose soil, but consider the resulting soil disturbance and potential for erosion. Broken root pieces may re-root and become new plants.

You can mow or weed-whip larger patches of these plants when they are flowering to weaken the plants and significantly reduce seed production

**Chemical:** Careful spot-applications of glyphosate (Roundup®, etc.) or triclopyr (Garlon®, etc.) are the easiest and most effective means of control. Triclopyr is a broadleaf-specific herbicide and won't harm grasses or sedges. Be carefully not to 'overspray' and harm neighboring, desirable plants. Herbicide must be applied before flowering to prevent seed production.

Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

**NOTE:** Stay on, and keep pets on, established roads and trails to prevent weed seed dispersal. Clean off shoes and clothes of any seeds before traveling to other locations and dispose of the seeds in the trash.

## NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

A diverse selection of woodland species will compete with weedier plants and provide for a more resilient and productive plant community. For flowering plants in part shade or the woodland edge, consider wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*), solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) and starry false solomon's seal (*Smilacina stellata*).

0  
Pesky  
Native



Flowers and seeds

Photo credit: [www.florafinder.com/Species/Circaea\\_lutetiana.php](http://www.florafinder.com/Species/Circaea_lutetiana.php)