

# Invasive Plant Pest Alert

## Hardy Kiwi – a.k.a. Tara Vine

*Actinidia arguta* (Siebold & Zucc.) Planch. ex Miq.

### Recognition

Hardy kiwi is a twining, woody vine with alternate, simple leaves. Its leaves have distinctive red petioles and finely-toothed, wavy margins. Flowers are pale green/white and clustered in the leaf axils, while the fruits are green, grape-shaped, and smooth. Hardy Kiwi resembles Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) in habit, but the mature bark of Hardy Kiwi is gray and flaky. Hardy Kiwi is native to east Asia.



### Current Threat

Hardy Kiwi threatens forests in western Massachusetts through complete domination of mature trees. Hardy Kiwi can germinate and grow under a closed canopy and climb surrounding vegetation, eventually killing its support. The vine then spreads to surrounding trees, opening larger gaps in the forest over time.

Hardy Kiwi fruits are eaten by Raccoons. Other mammals, and possibly large birds such as Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse, are also expected to consume the fruits and disperse the seeds.



Hardy Kiwi vines can grow over 20 feet per year, overwhelming other vegetation by forming dense mats and curtains. In winter, trees supporting Hardy Kiwi vines cannot bear snow and ice loading, causing branches to break and trunks to snap.

### Potential Threat

As its name implies, Hardy Kiwi tolerates cold temperatures (to -25°F or lower). Various entities in the U.S., including several state agricultural extension services, promote Hardy Kiwi as an alternative crop vine, evidently unaware of its capacity to become established in and disrupt natural areas. If Hardy Kiwi becomes widely planted in the region, the potential for its escape from cultivation will increase, with possible dire consequences for forestlands. Avoiding this threat by not propagating Hardy Kiwi is prudent.

**This “amphitheater” of Hardy Kiwi covers approximately 3 acres with an intertwining mat more than 4 feet deep. The ground under the mat is littered with trees that have succumbed to the vines’ weight.**

### What You Can Do

- Learn to recognize Hardy Kiwi
- Don’t cultivate Hardy Kiwi on your property
- Spread the word to gardeners and others of the threat this species poses to natural areas

