

# What You Can Do

Manual removal of porcelain berry can help reduce the overall size of an infestation. Ideally, pull the roots and all. It is especially helpful to pull or cut back plants before berries are fully developed (ideally before early August) to prevent the plant from spreading to new locations. Laying them out to cook on a hot driveway for a couple days is effective. If plants are pulled when ripe berries are present, the material must be bagged up and sent to a landfill to ensure that berries are not spread to other sites by hungry birds and rodents!

Common herbicides are effective at controlling infestations, especially when applied to very freshly cut stumps of large vines. Seek a professional for advice on how to apply them and control this aggressive plant.

## A native alternative: Fox grape

The Fox grape *Vitis labrusca* is the wild grape from which our popular “Concord grape” was originally developed by Ephraim Wales Bull in 1849. Concord grapes are hybrids, roughly 2/3 *V. labrusca* and 1/3 *V. vinifera* (wine grape). Native Fox grapes are tough plants, extremely popular with wildlife, and the fruit makes great juice and jelly with a variety of flavors. They’re easy to grow from seeds or cuttings. Just follow your nose to ripe grapes in the woods ... although around here, you may find Concord or similarly delicious “mutts”!



Fox grapes (*V. labrusca*)  
Source: Native Plant Trust

The Invasive Species Committee may be able to provide some guidance, possibly help, and would like to know about any porcelain berry in town. To contact the committee, send email to:

***invasive@grotonma.gov***

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# INVASION ALERT!

## *Porcelain berry*



*Porcelain berry leaves in late July (left) and fully ripe berries in October (right)*

Image source: Ben Wolfe

An aggressive vine with distinctive berries has recently arrived in Groton. Like the notorious Asian bittersweet, this vine can quickly smother native shrubs and small trees and reduce the biodiversity of native habitats. It can also be an annoying weed in home landscapes and gardens.

The purpose of this flyer is to show you what it is, how to identify it, and what you can do about it.



# Description

Porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis glandulosa*), also known as Amur peppervine, wild grape or creeper, is a member of the grape family of plants native to southeast Asia. It was introduced to the USA in the 1870s as an ornamental plant and has spread rapidly ever since.

# Overview and Impacts



Porcelain berry in a Groton woodland clearing  
Source: Ben Wolfe

Porcelain berry uses tendrils to latch onto fences, other structures, and importantly native vegetation. Its thick growth reduces light levels for other plants. Porcelain berry can grow quite fast, with some reports of 15 feet of growth in a single growing season. Eventually native plants are smothered and outcompeted by the porcelain berry vines.



Closeup of ripening berries  
Source: Wikimedia commons

Grown as an ornamental plant in the USA for over a century, porcelain berry has attractive foliage, striking berries, and vigorous growth that made it an apparently desirable plant for landscaping. However, it has escaped cultivation and can be found invading woodlands and roadsides in many parts of the Northeastern and Midwestern U.S. Similarity to our native wild grapes (*Vitis riparia*, *V. labrusca*) and cultivated grapes (*V. vinifera*) make it a tricky identification and a sneaky invader!



Closeup of leaves, tendrils, and panicles with immature berries  
Source: Ben Wolfe

# Identification

One of the biggest challenges with identifying porcelain berry is that it looks a lot like native and semiwild grape species such as “Concord” grapes that can ramble through bushes and tree canopies of New England. Both our native grapes and porcelain berry are in the same plant family (Vitaceae, the grape family) and they share similar leaf structures and growth habits.

There is considerable variation in the leaf appearance of porcelain berry plants, but they generally have heart shaped to more deeply lobed leaves with serrated edges. Don’t rely on the leaves to make your ID, though!



Porcelain berry (L) and wild grape (R) leaves  
Source: Ben Wolfe



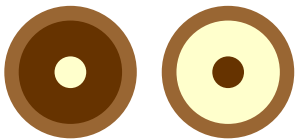
Porcelain berry (top) and wild grape (bottom) stems  
Source: Ben Wolfe

The leaf stems of porcelain berry tend to be lighter and smoother, while wild grape are redder and fuzzier. But again ... that’s not enough to be diagnostic.

Native grape vines, when mature, have shaggy bark that peels in narrow strips. Porcelain berry vines have lenticels (raised spots) and their bark doesn’t peel off in strips.



Porcelain berry (L) and wild grape (R) bark on mature vines  
Source: Penn. State Extension



Porcelain berry Wild grape

An easier way to tell the difference between these lookalikes is the color of the pith (the tissue in the very center of a mature stem). White = porcelain berry; brown = grape.

Porcelain berries themselves are distinctive, but their striking shiny appearance and bright colors often come too late to effectively manage the vine (Sept.-Oct.).



Blue/purple ripe berries  
Source: Ben Wolfe