Chinese wisteria, Japanese wisteria

*Wisteria sinensis* (Sims) Sweet; *Wisteria floribunda* ((Willd.) DC.

Pea or Bean Family (Fabaceae)

**DESCRIPTION**
Wisteria is a long-lived, vigorous, deciduous, woody, climbing and twining vine.

**Height** – Wisteria vines may climb to a height of 60–70 feet or more if suitable support is available.

**Stem** – Wisteria stems twine around any solid support, including trees, fences, buildings, and even each other. They are smooth and gray in color and can attain diameters of up to 5 inches or more. Stems of Japanese wisteria twine upwards in a counter-clockwise direction whereas those of Chinese wisteria and the native North American species (*Wisteria frutescens*) twine clockwise.

**Leaves** – The leaves of wisteria are pinnately compound with 7–19 leaflets; they are arranged alternately on the stem.

**Flowers** – Wisteria flowers are showy, violet-blue in color, and occur in 6–18 inch-long, drooping clusters that appear before the leaves have expanded.

**Fruit and seed** – The fruits of Chinese and Japanese wisteria are fuzzy, flattened pods about 4–5 inches long containing 4–6 seeds.

**DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT**
Wisteria is a popular ornamental landscape plant, esteemed drooping clusters of showy blooms. Although there is a native North American species of wisteria, Chinese and Japanese wisteria are preferred by the horticultural industry because the inflorescences are larger and the plants more vigorous. In addition to its smaller inflorescence (only 3–4 inches long), the native American wisteria may be distinguished by its smooth seed pod. The native species [*Wisteria frutescens* (L.) Poir.] grows naturally from Virginia to Florida; occurrences of it in Pennsylvania appear to be the result of plantings.

**EFFECTS OF INVASION**
Naturalized populations of Chinese and Japanese wisteria seem to result from abandoned plantings at former home sites or old nurseries. The vines can spread over large areas of forest, twining around trees and eventually competing for space in the canopy. A dense, nearly impenetrable thicket has resulted in some areas; normal forest succession can be inhibited. Wisteria vines can girdle other woody plants because of their twining growth.
REPRODUCTION AND METHODS OF DISPERAL
Most infestations of non-native wisteria appear to be the result of the persistence and vegetative spread of former plantings, although seed propagation is also possible.

CONTROL
Mechanical – Cutting the stem near the point of rooting followed by painting the cut surface with herbicide is the best means of control.

Chemical – see above

Biological - No biological control options are currently known.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR LANDSCAPE USE
The native American wisteria (Wisteria frutescens) is a good alternative to non-native wisterias, especially in areas adjacent to forests.

REFERENCES


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