TWINBERRY HONEYSUCKLE
*Lonicera involucrata* Banks ex Spreng.

Plant Symbol = LOIN5

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center

Alternative Names
twinberry, black twin-berry, four-line honeysuckle, bearberry honeysuckle

Uses
Warning: Twinberry honeysuckle is considered toxic and should be used with caution.

Ethnobotanic: The Quileute and Kwakwaka’wakw people used these berries as a black pigment (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994). The Haida rubbed the berries on the scalp to prevent hair from turning gray (Ibid.). A decoction of the bark has been applied to a woman’s breasts to encourage milk flow (Moerman 1998). An infusion was used to treat chest and stomach complaints and to cleanse the body (Ibid.). The Carrier boiled the leaves and used the liquid to bathe sore eyes, or applied the crushed leaves as a poultice to open sores (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994).

Status
Please consult the Plants Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description
*General:* Honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae). Twinberry honeysuckle (*Lonicera involucrata*) is an erect clustered shrub one to three meters high with freely exfoliating bark (Peck 1961). The leaves are opposite, short-stemmed, somewhat elliptical to broadly lanced shaped, pointed often hairy beneath (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994). The flowers are yellow, tinged with red, and cupped by a large pair of green to purplish bracts. The fruits are roundish or oval, blackish berries, paired on long axillary stalks and distinct; ripening August or September (Grimm 1993).

*Distribution:* *Lonicera involucrata* is widely distributed across North America from Quebec westward to Alaska and British Columbia and southward into California, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona (McMinn 1939). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation
Twinberry honeysuckle is typically found in moist forests, clearings, riparian habitats, swamps and thickets (MacKinnon, Pojar & Coupe’ 1992). It prefers a good moist soil but can succeed in any fertile soil. This species grows best and produces abundance of fruit in open sunlight compared to a lost of fruit when grown in the shade.

Establishment
*Propagation by Seed:* *Lonicera involucrata* seeds should be collected from isolated plants and extracted by maceration in water (Dirr & Heuser 1987). Sow the seeds as soon as they are ripe in a cold frame. When the seedlings are large enough, plant them directly into their permanent positions in late spring or early summer.

Management
Twinberry honeysuckle berries has been noted as poisonous. The fruit is bitter and sour and are eaten by some. Since the European species of honeysuckle species are regarded as emetic and cathartic, they are better avoided in favor of something less dubious (Mozingo 1987).
Somewhat available from native plant nurseries. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government.” The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading “Department of Agriculture.”

References


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