

Plant Diversity Website

Lonicera reticulata Raf.

Common Names: grape honeysuckle, wild honeysuckle, yellow vine honeysuckle (but not yellow honeysuckle, which is *Lonicera flava* 1, 6).

Etymology: *Lonicera* is named after the 16th century German botanist, physicist and herbalist Adam Lonitzer (also spelled Lonicer), while *reticulata* comes from the Latin *reticulatus* meaning “netlike” or “netted.” This in turn came from *rete* or *retis* which both mean “net” in Latin. Some texts still refer to this species by its synonym, *L. prolifera*, whose name comes from the New Latin *prolifer*, meaning “fruitful” or “productive.” The term honeysuckle comes from the honey or nectar that can be easily sucked from the flower (3, 4).



Botanical synonyms (1):

Lonicera sullivantii Gray, *Lonicera prolifera* (Kirchn.) Booth ex Rehd., *Lonicera prolifera* (Kirchn.) Booth ex Rehd. var. *glabra* Gleason,

FAMILY: Caprifoliaceae, the Honeysuckle family

Quick Notable Features:

- the lower leaves are sessile, while those below the inflorescence form a fused disk that is rounded and nearly orbicular
- the connate leaves are glaucous above and below

Plant Height: Usually a 0.6 to 1.0m high shrub (13).

Subspecies/varieties recognized: None found. It appears that the botanical synonyms, previous subspecies/varieties and the old name *L. prolifera*, have all been united under the name *Lonicera reticulata* (1). However some confusion does exist, with the name *L. prolifera* persisting in certain areas.

Most Likely Confused with: May be confused with *L. hirsuta* and *L. dioica*, while some may mistake any member of this genus with members of the genus *Euonymus*.

Habitat Preference: Rocky woods and banks (4).

Geographic Distribution in Michigan: It is only found in the adjacent counties of Houghton and Keweenaw in the Upper Peninsula (1).

Known Elevational Distribution: no information found

Complete Geographic Distribution: It is native to the eastern United States and Great Lakes area and now ranges from central NY to WI and south to MO and AK and has spread to KS, OK, MN, IA, IL, IN, MA and GA (1, 5).

Vegetative Plant Description: The perennial, woody plant is glabrous except for slight pubescence on the lower surfaces of the deciduous leaves. The erect, smooth-barked branches lack stipules, but there may be several “papery scales” present at the twig base. The leaves are angular and neither acute nor retuse. The uppermost leaves (seen in image of fruit below) are connate and form an orbicular disk below the inflorescence. The lower leaves are simple, opposite, and entire margined, and ovate or rounded (4, 11, 8, 12, 13).

Climbing Mechanism: Darwin noted that all members of *Lonicera* climb with the apex of the plant, which moves dextrally or, as Darwin refers to it “with the sun” (9).

Flower Description: The terminal, sessile inflorescence is an axillary spike; the flowers are complete with parts in fives. The fused, bilabiate corolla is glabrous outside and hairy inside, enlarged about the base and usually yellow. The flower is glabrous and glaucous, and the ovary is inferior (6, 8, 12, 13). The genus *Lonicera* is known to have 2-3 locules, however this has not been confirmed for this species, nor have descriptions of the stamens been located for this species.

Flowering Time: In the northeast and central United States it flowers in May and June. The same is true for adjacent parts of Canada (4).

Pollinator: Although specific data was not found for this species, the narrow-throated, fragrant flowers suggest pollination by moths or butterflies. The yellow color suggests it is pollinated nocturnally as yellow or white corollas are good indicators of such. Although moths are the most likely pollinators, other small insects and birds may also contribute.



Fruit Type and Description: The fruit (see image, which was labeled as *L. prolifera* at the source site) is a red berry that some authors describe as “watery” (4, 12).

Seed Description: The seeds are 4.5-5mm long and 3.5-4.5mm broad (4).

Dispersal Syndrome: The small, “attractive red, orange or black” fruits of the genus *Lonicera* are consumed by birds and the few to many seeds of each fruit are dispersed in feces as the bird travels (7). Nothing specific on dispersal was found for this species.

Distinguished by: The most similar members within the genus seem to be *L. hirsuta* and *L. dioica*. *Lonicera reticulata* is distinguished from those species by the connate leaves just below the inflorescence. The connate leaves of *L. reticulata* are orbicular, very glaucous above and broadly rounded or notched at the tip. The connate leaves of *L. hirsuta* and *L. dioica* are distinctly longer than broad, only slightly glaucous, if at all, and more or less acute at each tip. Some native *Lonicera* shrubs can be distinguished from their invasive relatives by pith color, but

a similar convention could not be found to distinguish the vines. Members of *Lonicera* can also be confused with species of *Euonymus*. *Lonicera reticulata* almost always bears entire margins, while the leaf margins of members of *Euonymus* are finely serrate.

Other members of the family in Michigan (number species): *Lonicera* –18, *Diervilla* –1, *Kolkwitzia* –1, *Linnaea* –1, *Sambucus* –2, *Symphoricarpos* –3, *Triosteum* –2, *Viburnum* –11 (1).

Ethnobotanical Uses: This species is not listed in ethnobotanical summaries, and may not have been much utilized due to its limited distribution. Some summaries exclude it, while others list it, but have no listed ethnobotanical uses.

Phylogenetic Information: The family Caprifoliaceae consists of 36 genera and within the family, clades include Linnaeae (*Dipelta*, *Abelia*, *Kolkwitzia*, *Valeriana* and *Dipascus*), Diervillaceae (*Diervilla* and *Weigela*) and an unnamed clade of *Lonicera*, *Symphoricarpos* and their relatives. Currently, Caprifoliaceae are the only members of the Dipsacales clade, but this organization is somewhat in doubt (2). As it stands, the Dipsacales are part of the Euasterids II, which also contains the Aquifoliales, Apiales, Dipsacales, and Asterales. These are all members of the Core Asterids of the Asterid clade, which, along with the Rosids, make up the Core Tricolpates (2).

Interesting Quotation or Other Interesting Factoid not inserted above:

- Supposedly, seeds of *Lonicera* species remain viable after storage for 15 years in sealed containers, at low temperatures (7).
- The accepted name is *Lonicera reticulata* (1), however many publications refer to it as *Lonicera prolifera* (6); this is true of websites as well.

Literature and websites used:

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Image Credits (all used with permission):

- 1) Flower image is copyright Robert W. Freckman Herbarium by photographer Christopher Noll at <http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=LONRET>
- 2) Fruit image is derived from the UC Botanical Garden at Berkeley at the following url <http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu/plantbar/plantbar1.htm> and is labeled as *L. prolifera*.

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