

## Guide to Porcelainberry

*Ampelopsis glandulosa* (Wall.) Momiy.



Photo 23431248, (c) Sandy Wolkenberg, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

**Description:** Woody vine (liana) from dense, tangled roots, climbing by abundant tendrils produced at most nodes; bark becoming rough with prominent lenticels, but not shredding; stems pubescent when young; leaves extremely variable, simple to deeply lobed, the margins toothed; vein axils webbed on leaf underside, especially the basal veins; inflorescences in axillary branched clusters; berries whitish, blue or lilac, often marbled.

**Where Found:** Native to eastern Asia; spreading throughout the northeastern US and into the southeast; forest edges, roadsides, lakeshores and other open disturbed areas with light. Widespread in New York City and prohibited in New York State. The sale, transport or trade of the species is prohibited by New York State law [Part 575](#).

**Natural History:** This is one of our most destructive invasive plants. It climbs over other vegetation, forming dense masses that shade the canopy. The added weight causes breakage in wind and ice storms. It has abundant tendrils and extremely flexible stems enabling it to climb the outside of the tree, often reaching the top of the canopy and forming a tent over the tree or shrub. Another highly destructive vine, the Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) does not have tendrils but climbs by twining. A particularly unfortunate tree may have Oriental Bittersweet climbing the trunk and branches while Porcelain Berry smothers it from the outside. The vines eventually form a dense mounded moon-scape covering vast areas. Deprived of light and rain, the soil beneath becomes a sterile, lifeless desert. The fruits are dispersed by birds and other animals. The seeds float, facilitating water dispersal.

**Cultural History:** The species was introduced to North America in 1887 by the Prince Nursery at Kissena (Queens), New York (Del Tredici, 2017).

**Name Notes:** The various colors of the mature fruit resemble the colors of porcelain. The genus *Ampelopsis* is derived from the Greek word "Ampelos", meaning vine. The epithet "glandulosa" presumably refers to the multicellular, glandular hairs on the twigs and leaf undersides. The epithet *glandulosa* was published before the epithet *brevipedunculata* and therefore has priority. (Both were published under alternative genera.)

**Species Notes:** The leaves of this species are exceedingly variable in shape and pubescence, even on the same plant. Subdivision into subspecies or varieties based on these characters is untenable. The species can be distinguished from our native Grapes by the very flexible stems with bark that does not peel in long strips (as in Grapes), abundant tendrils produced at most nodes and webbed vein axils on leaf undersides (see photo inset). Like many aggressive invaders in



our area, this species occurs in a genus (*Ampelopsis*) that is native to both Eastern Asia and eastern North America. The American species *Ampelopsis cordata* Michx., is native to the southeastern US. It is reported from Kings county, New York by Michael Feder, but not yet documented. It can be distinguished from Porcelain-berry by the glabrous twigs and unlobed leaves.

**Links:** iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GLoBI.

**References:** Del Tredici, P. 2017. The introduction of Japanese plants into North America. Botanical Review 83: 215–252.