

Snowberry

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Symphoricarpos albus*

Native to: North America

Habitat: Hedgerows, riverbanks, estates and older or abandoned gardens.

Snowberry is a deciduous shrub that can grow to a height of 2m. It was introduced to UK in the 1800s and was widely used as dense cover for game birds.

S. albus has whippy, bright brown, shiny branches. Leaves usually 1.5 – 5cm long (can grow up to 7cm long), are rounded but occasionally lobed and are in an opposite arrangement. From spring to the summer, clusters of tiny bright pink, bell-like flowers 6mm long, appear at the ends of the branches. These are followed in late summer by waxy-looking, white berries which are up to 1.5cm in diameter.

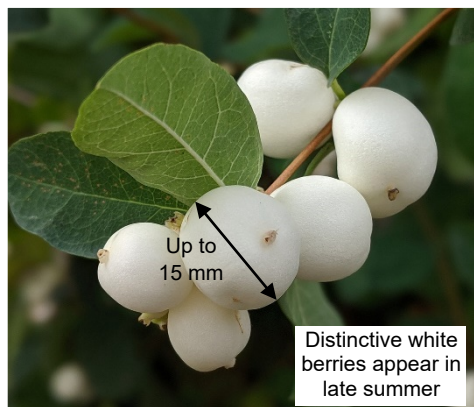
Snowberry spreads through suckering, in the right conditions the root system (rhizome) can grow rapidly and out-compete native plants. Once established *S. albus* can form dense thickets and suppress the growth of native plants and prevent access. Berries are poisonous to humans.

Due to its ability to grow rapidly, snowberry has been used as hedging, and to stabilise riverbanks and prevent erosion, which provided a corridor for further spread. As a result snowberry can

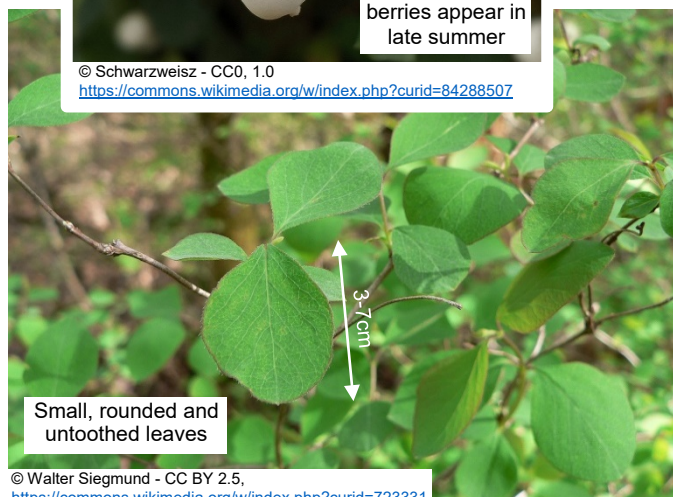


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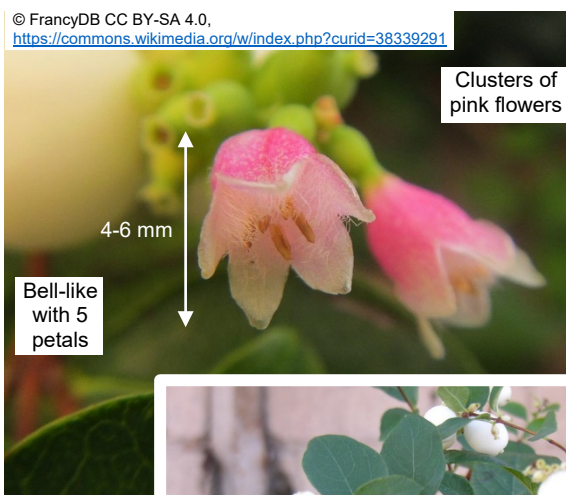
Key ID Features



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Identification throughout the year

Snowberry is easily identifiable throughout the year, although it loses its leaves in the winter, the distinctive white berries remain or until they are eaten by birds. During the winter, thickets have a grey-brown colour and untidy appearance.



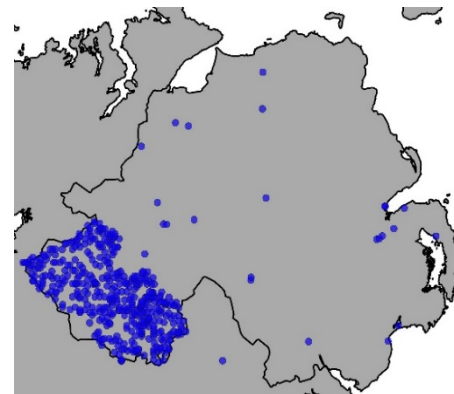
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Distribution

This species is widespread across Northern Ireland. Records for this species are significantly under-reported.



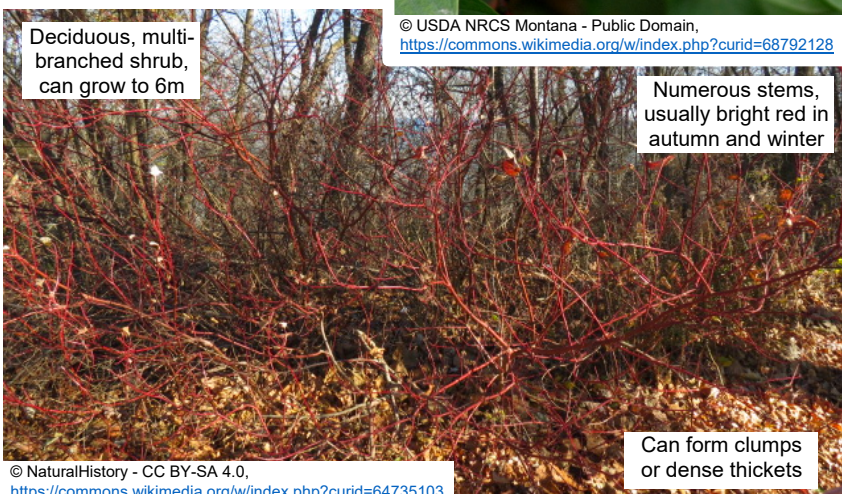
Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland - available
<https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000464104>
Check website for current distribution

Similar Species

Red-osier dogwood Invasive non-native (*Cornus sericea*)



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Larger leaves
(5-15cm)

Cluster of
creamy-white
flowers (5cm)

Cluster of
white berries
follow flowers

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Numerous stems,
usually bright red in
autumn and winter

Can form clumps
or dense thickets

Coralberry Invasive non-native (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)



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Twigs hairy
when young

Leaves 1-2
cm long



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Pink
berries

References and further reading:

Booy O., Wade M. and Roy H. 2015. Field Guide to Invasive Plants and Animals in Britain. Bloomsbury. London.
Symphoricarpos albus (L.) S.F.Blake in GBIF Secretariat (2019). GBIF Backbone Taxonomy. Checklist dataset <https://doi.org/10.15468/39omei> accessed via [GBIF.org](https://www.gbif.org)

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